



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

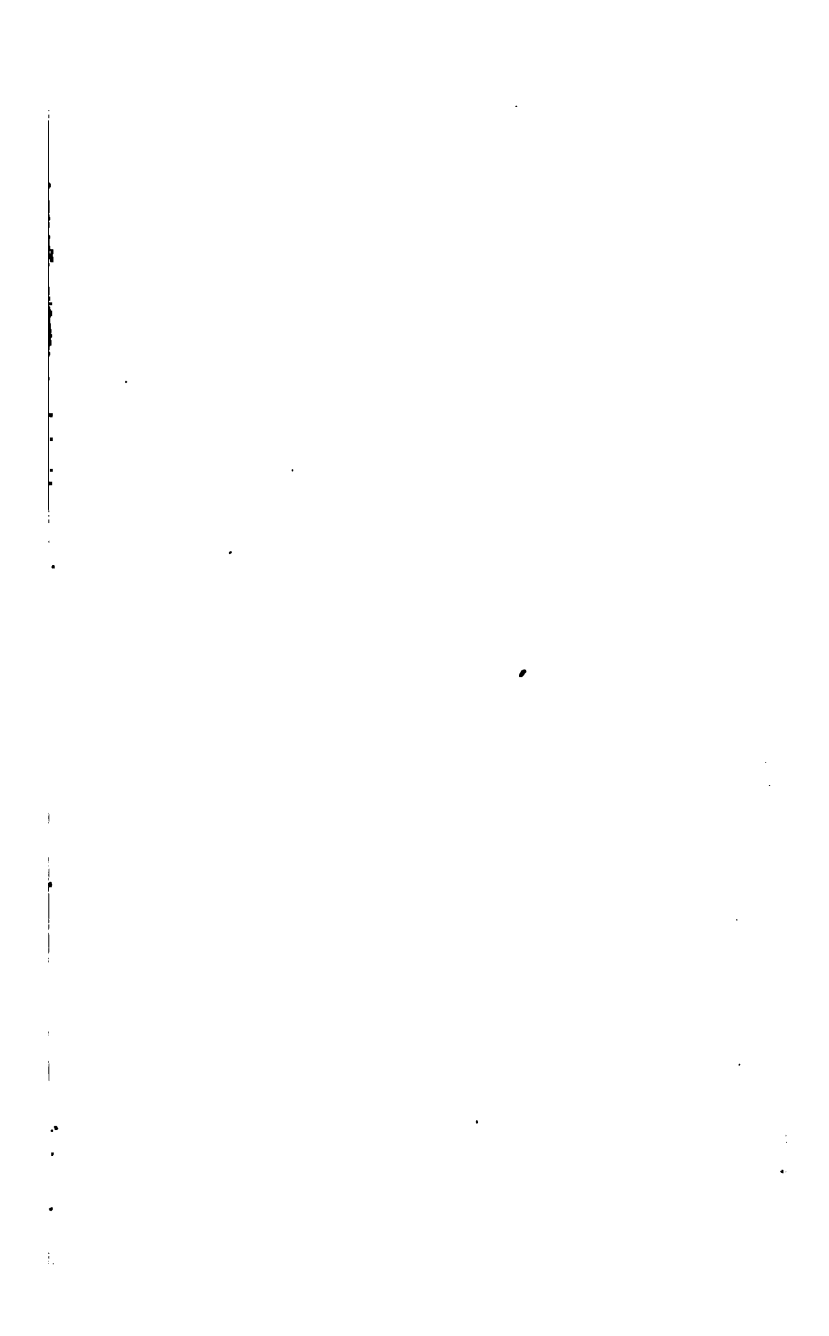


600032682R

42.

525.



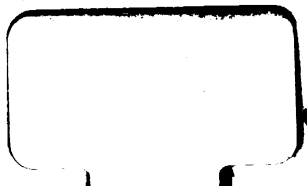




600032682R

42.

525.





THE DEACONSHIP:

A

TREATISE ON THE OFFICE OF DEACON.

WITH

SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS REVIVAL

IN THE

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



BY THE REV. JOHN G. LORIMER,

MINISTER OF ST DAVID'S PARISH, GLASGOW,

AUTHOR OF "HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCH OF FRANCE,"

"MANUAL OF PRESBYTERY," ETC.

EDINBURGH:

JOHN JOHNSTONE, HUNTER SQUARE,

LONDON: R. GROOMBRIDGE.

MDCCCXLII.

525.

ENTERED IN STATIONERS' HALL.

Printed by JOHN JOHNSTONE, High Street, Edinburgh.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTORY.

REVIVAL OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Remarkable State of Society and of the World at the present moment—The Trial of Evangelical Religion—Growing Pressure of the Question connected with the Poor—What light the Scriptures throw on the Subject—The Office of Deacon expressly intended for the Management—Perversion of it in some Churches—Non-application in others—Its Revival peculiarly called for at the present day, ... *Page 5-10.*

CHAPTER I.

ON THE NATURE OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Mistakes of the Church of Rome and the Church of England in regard to the Office—Solely concerns the Ecclesiastico-Secular Interests of the Church—Such an Office might have been looked for—Would naturally Rise out of the Progress of the Church—Called for, for the Relief of the Christian Ministry from Secular Cares—Desirable as a Shield against Mercenary Imputations—Remarkable Delicacy of the Apostles in regard to Money Matters—The Office Permanent in its Nature—Reasons for this more Powerful now than in Primitive Times, ... *Page 11-16.*

CHAPTER II.

OF THE GENERAL IMPORTANCE OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON.

Christianity naturally Tends to the Acquisition of Wealth, but, for wise Reasons, there are always to be Poor in the Christian Church—The Gospel in its own nature makes Provision for them, by Creating a Spirit of Liberality—Earnestly calls Attention to the Temporal Wants of the Poor—Identifies Regard for the Pious Poor with Regard for Christ—The Office needed to Prevent the Misdirection of the Wealth which True Religion Creates—Early and Corrupting Application of Money in the Christian Church—The Special Care of the Poor is Conducive to the Credit of Christianity—Claims of the World in regard to the Poor imperatively require that the Church should prove herself their warm Friend, ... *Page 17-26.*

CHAPTER III.

OF THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON.

Founded on Scripture Authority—6th Chapter of the Acts, 1st Chapter of Philip-
pians, and 3d of 1st Timothy—But has no connection with the Preaching
of the Gospel or Administering Ordinances—This Proved by the *Origins*
of the Office and the *Qualifications* which are Demanded in the Word—
Circumstances out of which the Institution Sprung—Female Deacon-
esses Establish the Secular Nature of the Office—The Cases of Philip
and Stephen lend no Countenance to the Idea that the Office is Spirit-
ual, ... Page 27-34.

CHAPTER IV.

TESTIMONY OF ANCIENT ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY TO THE
OFFICE OF DEACON.

PART I.

Down to A.D. 250—The Notices of History Favourable to the Scriptural Nature
of the Office—Even the Testimonies of Tertullian and Cyprian Hostile
to a Deacon Administering Baptism—"The Apostolic Constitutions"—
Jerome—Sixth General Council of Constantinople, &c., &c.—Point in
the same Direction—Sentiments of Neander—Explanation of the Un-
warranted Change in the Office in the Third Century—Concession by
Bishop Croft, ... Page 35-41.

CHAPTER V.

TESTIMONY OF MODERN ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

THE REFORMERS.

PART II.

The Waldenses hold the Scriptural View of the Office—Also, Wickliffe—
Tyndal—Lambert—Ursinus—Budaus—The Lutheran Church—Genevan
Church—Calvin—The Swiss Churches—The French Protestant Church—
Belgic—Dutch, Ancient and Modern—Nonconformists of New England
—On this Subject Presbyterians and Congregationalists are agreed,
Page 42-52.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS, AND MODE OF
APPOINTMENT.

Besides a Common Education, they require to be, 1. Of Honest Report—2.
Full of the Holy Ghost—3. Of Wisdom—In addition to these, there are
the Qualifications detailed in 1st Timothy, 3d Chapter—Deacons must be,
1. Grave—2. Not Double-tongued—3. Temperate—4. Free from Avarice
—5. Acquainted with the Doctrines of the Gospel—6. Must hold the
Mystery of the Faith in a Pure Conscience—7. Must be Proved—8. Must
be the Husband of One Wife—9. Must Rule well their own Family.

MODE OF APPOINTMENT.

Plainly Taught—Elected, not by the Apostles, but by the Members of the
Christian Church, who judged of Spiritual Qualifications—Chose excel-

CONTENTS.

v

lently—Objection Answered—Churches of the Reformation Differed as to the Mode of Appointment to the Deaconship—The Church of Scotland held Free Election—The Ordination not in the hands of the People, but of the Church Courts—Extract from Rev. Dr Dick's Lectures.

Page 53-65.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE DUTIES OF DEACON.

His chief Care the Poor—Whether merely the Christian or the General Poor?—Reasons for Including both Classes—The Original Institution of the Office not inconsistent with this—In regard to the *Mode* in which the Deacon should Attend the Poor—1. He should Visit them and give his Charity in their own Houses—2. He should Encourage all Plans, Moral and Economical, for the Prevention of Poverty—Friendly Societies—Savings' Bank on the Aggressive Principle, as at Manchester—The Loan Fund, as Conducted in Ireland—The *Spirit* in which the Deacon should Discharge his Duties—His other Duties connected with the Financial Affairs of the Church or Congregation,

Page 66-77.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OFFICE OF DEACON AS IT APPEARS IN THE STANDARDS AND HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

Paganism Despoils, Popery Injures the Poor—Evangelical Protestantism their best Friend—The Office of Deacon recognised and acted upon in the very Dawn of the Reformation in Scotland—Approved by the Church of England at the same period—Foreign Congregations in London—Views of the First Book of Discipline of the Church of Scotland (1560)—Deacons in John Knox's Church in Edinburgh—Views of the Second Book of Discipline (1578)—Of Alexander Henderson's celebrated Treatise on the "Government and Order of the Church of Scotland" (1641)—Of Guthrie the Martyr's Treatise of Elders and Deacons at a later date—Large number of Deacons in Glasgow—Dunfermline and Country Parishes in the 17th Century—Anderson's Testimony to the State of the Deaconship in 1714—Act of General Assembly in 1719—State of the Deaconship since—General Decline—Proof of this—Indications of Modern Revival,

Page 78-94.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GENERAL ADVANTAGES OF A REVIVAL OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON, AND THE SPECIAL CALL TO IT AT THE PRE- SENT DAY.

1. The Revival would be highly Useful to the Eldership—It would supply more Men, and of higher Qualification, and it would prove an excellent Training School—2. It would be Beneficial to the Minister—3. It would interest a large body of Men in the Poor, and reflexly do Good to the Deacon himself—4. The Poor would receive increased Attention, in a variety of ways—5. The Church would be Strengthened in her General Character and Claims as the Friend of the Poor—These Recommendations particularly Important at the present day, from the State of the Poor and of Society—No serious Obstacles in the way of the Revival of the Office can be apprehended,

Page 96-105.

APPENDIX.

NO. I.—TESTIMONY OF AN ENGLISH PRELATE TO PRESBYTERIAN VIEWS OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON.

Statement of Dr Croft, Bishop of Hereford—The Deacon *not* a Spiritual Order—The First Departure from Scripture Views of the Office in the Second Century—Even this was limited—Refutation of the Alleged Testimony of Ignatius—Reply to Petavius—Origin of the Perversion—Chrysostom—The Office of Deacon in the Church of Rome—In the Church of England, ... *Page* 107-110.

NO. II.—REVIVAL OF THE ORDER OF DEACONS STRONGLY AND IMMEDIATELY RECOMMENDED BY MINISTERS AND ELDERS OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH IN EDINBURGH, 1841.

Associations in Edinburgh and Glasgow for improving the Character and Condition of the Poor—"Statement of the Edinburgh Committee," recommend Revival of the Office of Deacon—Prevailing Social Evils to be met—A Moral Agency might be drawn from Christian Congregations—The Charge should be limited to a very small number of Families—The Practical Objects which should be aimed at—The Means to be employed—The Desirableness of such a Moral Agency—A Caution against Exaggerated Expectations from its Labours—Inferiority to the full application of the Parochial System—Facts in this Connection, *Page* 110-117.

NO. III.—PRACTICAL EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE WORKING OF THE DEACONSHIP EVEN IN A LARGE TOWN.

Testimony of a Deacon of 18 years' standing, . . . *Page* 118-121.

NO. IV.—SAVINGS' BANKS IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEACONSHIP.

The Aggressive Principle acted upon at Manchester with success, *Page* 121-122.

NO. V.—EXAGGERATED VIEWS OF THE CRIME OF GLASGOW AND SCOTLAND—THE SUCCESS OF RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL MEANS IN REPRESSING IT.

Injurious Effects of exaggerating Crime—The Statement of Mr Sheriff Alison in regard to the Consumption of Ardent Spirits in Glasgow—In regard to Weekly Intoxication—In regard to Female Profligacy in the Mills—Considered and Answered—Crime of Scotland—To what its Increase is Owing—Increase of Population—Large proportion of the Offenders Irish—The Effect of the New System of County Police in swelling the apparent number of Criminals—The last Illustrated by the Returns from East Lothian—The Necessity of Classification in Criminal Returns—Misleading Effect in aggregate numbers—Illustrated in Glasgow and Calton—Diminution of Crime in both—Testimony of Captain Miller, of the Glasgow Police, to the Efficacy of Moral, Educational, and Religious Means in Diminishing Crime—Of Mr Rutherglen, one of the Magistrates of Calton, and of Mr M'Laren, Superintendent of the Barony Poor to the same Purpose—Comparison of the Crime of Scotland with that of England and Wales, and with that of Ireland, even in the most favourable Province of the latter—Conclusion from the whole Facts, *Page* 122-134.

INTRODUCTORY.

REVIVAL OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

FROM a variety of causes, one is apt to attach an undue importance to the events of the period in which he happens to live; but there seems to be no question, whether we contemplate the state of the Church or the world at home or abroad—the discussion of great principles—the dissatisfaction with the present, the aspiration after a better state of things—general depression trying the faith and patience of large bodies of men—the efforts made for the propagation of the Gospel—and the remarkable facilities of intercourse among the nations of the earth, that our lot has been cast in extraordinary times. It may be that some great prophetic period is at hand, if it has not already arrived. One striking feature in the picture seems to be the trial which is about to be made of true Christianity in various forms. It cannot be doubted that evangelical religion has made immense progress throughout Protestant Christendom, and particularly in

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON, during

THE POWER OF DEACON progress is made

THE POWER OF DEACON the enlarged

THE POWER OF DEACON of script

THE POWER OF DEACON too, in the

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON in regard

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

THE POWER OF DEACON

public attention, with effect, to human suffering, whether in the form of slavery or excessive labour, or poverty. It is in connection with the last of the following tract is written. The progress of religion would have created a deeper interest in the condition of the poor, as soon as their indigence was known. It would have searched them out in any circumstances; but particular events have brought forth and named the evil to the public unexpectedly, and with force. The melancholy truth is now beginning to dawn, that, in the large, and even smaller towns, manufacturing villages, there is a vast amount of destitution—that the evil has been growing for so long that it is now reaching a crisis—and that there is no prospect of speedy or permanent relief. In these circumstances, the concern and sympathy of all, and especially of Christians, are deeply awakened. Various remedies are suggested—some of them, to say the least, of dubious efficacy, and at best temporary alleviations. In these circumstances, the friends of religion turn to the Scriptures. They ask themselves, what the Word of God throws any light on the treatment of poverty? and they find that Christians are not left upon to feel for, and relieve the indigent, but that express provision is made for this in the constitution of the Christian Church. They find that there is an order of office-bearers—the deacon—divinely appointed for the care of the poor. The natural inquiry, whether this order may not be so revived as to afford at least, substantial aid in meeting prevailing evils. It is plain that there is no prospect of that evil so speedily passing away as to render a per-

manent provision unnecessary; and even though the worst were, ere long, to disappear, it is desirable to have that full organization of the Christian Church which its Divine Founder intended. It is when carrying His plans into operation, that the choicest blessing may be expected both on the temporal and spiritual interests of society. To many it may seem singular, that when evangelical religion is so much tried with error and opposition of various kinds, a new, and difficult, and absorbing question should arise, demanding the sympathy and exertion of all its friends. This, so to speak, is an aggravation of the trial. But it is not an unusual course with God. While it is evangelical religion which gives increased feeling and interest in behalf of the poor—if the present wide-spread distress be the means of leading the Christian Church generally, in all its branches, to recur to scriptural views of the office of deacon, and to complete its organization where it has been defective, or to correct it where it has been erroneous, an immense service will be rendered to Christianity, and through it, as well as by means still more direct, to the interests of the poor. It is well known that some Christian Churches have perverted the office of deacon altogether, have withdrawn it from the care of the poor, and have turned it into an office for preaching and baptizing; while others, though admitting its scriptural character, and distinctly recognising it in their standards, have either not acted upon it, or have devolved its duty upon a separate office-bearer. The duty, in the great majority of cases, may be creditably attended to in the Church of Scotland. Indeed, the ruling elder may often act fully as much as a deacon as in his more appropriate calling.

But this blending is injurious in a variety of ways. It confounds what is desirable should be distinct, and what is distinct in Scripture. It impairs the spiritual character of the office of ruling elder, and greatly diminishes the number of persons whose services might be obtained for the office of deacon. The poor generally receive the aid only of men who are supposed to be qualified for the office of ruling elder, while they ought to be blessed with the service of the far larger body who may possess the qualifications, and have no objections to exercise those as deacons. The benefit which is derived from the services of deacons, where they are numerous, shows the importance of being conformed as much as possible to the apostolic model. Indeed, no small part of the success of Dr Chalmers' experiment in St John's, in this city, was owing to them. In the Church of England, where the office of deacon, in its scriptural character and object, is unknown, the Church, as a Church, takes no charge of the poor, but leaves them to the care of overseers—an office entirely secular—administered by officers who may, or may not, have any religious profession whatever. The revival of the office of deacon, then, at all times important, is peculiarly called for at the present day. If God intends to try the strength of that evangelical religion which has been growing of late years, it is well that the Christian Church should be complete in its organization, and prepared at every point for the conflict. The poor have usually been the friends of the Gospel—friends when higher parties have been hostile. It is one of its peculiarities, too, distinguishing it from all other religious systems, that "it is preached to the poor;" and who can

tell what service they, by their prayers, as well as by other means, may render to the Evangelical Church, in return for her growing attention at once to their temporal and spiritual wants. Apart from the blessing which waits upon the faithful discharge of duty, they may prove a source of direct strength and support.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE NATURE OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON IN
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

As it is proposed, in the following pages, to advocate the revival of the office of deacon, it is desirable to have clear and distinct views of its nature. Though nothing can be plainer or more certain, taking the Word of God for our guide, yet there have been various misapprehensions in regard to it. The Church of Rome and the Church of England have considered the deaconship as an order—the first and the lowest in the priesthood; and some Congregationalists have considered it as synonymous with presbyter; and, therefore, so far spiritual in its nature. But there is no foundation for either idea. The office solely regards what may be termed the ecclesiastico-secular interests of the Christian Church. It is expressly distinguished from the spiritual, properly so called; and was originally instituted to set the spiritual free from secular occupation. There may be diversity of opinion about some offices in the Christian Church—such as that of the ruling elder—though even as to that, Presbyterians may wonder that other Christians can have any hesitation; but there is no scope for difference of judgment in regard to the deacon. The fact that there is any such difference is a striking illustration of the power of

party and interested prejudice. It is not unnatural to suppose that, as Christianity, though spiritual in itself, deals with men still in the body, and *affects*, while it is so far dependent for its propagation upon, temporal interests, so that there should be some office in connection with it to take charge of its secular concerns; and this, accordingly, is precisely the design of the office of deacon. There would have been an obvious defect—at least an unnecessary, and, it may be, injurious blending of the secular and the sacred—had there been no such office.

Though the original institution rose out of a particular emergency—a murmuring as to the provision made for the Hellenist as distinguished from the Hebrew widow at Jerusalem, yet it is plain, though this case had not occurred, there would have been others which would soon have rendered such an appointment indispensable. The progress of Christianity would have demanded it. It was more accordant, however, with the free and unsystematic character of the early Christian Church, to create the office, when it was plainly needed, than to set out with an original formal platform comprehending it. This also commended the institution the more to the acceptance of the humble followers of the Cross.

The original institution, I have said, was designed to meet the case of a particular class of widows; but the office was not created to meet this or all classes of widows exclusively, or even of the whole Christian poor alone. It contemplated a wider sphere—even the separation of the spiritual office of the apostleship and ministry from all unnecessary secular occupation. The care of poor widows came first, but there would soon have been the care of the general poor; and even though

these might have been otherwise provided for, yet the collection of means for the maintenance of the ministry and places of worship, and to defray the expenses of the administration of ordinances, would have required such an order of office-bearers as the deacon. The principle which governed the appointment was:—"It is not fit, it is not proper or becoming for the ministers of the Gospel to leave the Word of God, and to serve tables:" whether the tables be those of the poor, or for receiving and paying away money for any cause connected with the Christian Church—such as Christian missions—still they involve work more or less secular, which others can attend to, and from which it is most desirable that the ministers of religion should be set free. Besides unnecessary occupation, there is another reason. The Spirit of God foreseeing how mercenary the Christian Church would one day become, and how injurious this would prove to its character, manifested a remarkable *delicacy* in regard to all money matters in connection with the ministry. Hence, under His teaching, the care of the apostles to avoid every thing which savoured of the mercenary, or exposed to its temptations and imputations. Doubtless it was from this cause that Paul would receive no provision from some of the Churches among which he laboured, and preferred to earn his bread by tent-making,—probably working at this employment over night, after preaching during the day, rather than be indebted to those who would misapprehend his standing upon his undoubted rights as a minister. It was doubtless for the same reason that, in sending the contributions of the Church of Corinth to the poor saints in Judea, the apostle would

not go alone, nor take charge of the collection himself; but stated to the Corinthians, "When I come, whomsoever *ye shall approve by your letters*, them will I send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem: and if it be meet that I go also, *they shall go with me.*" (1 Cor. xvi. 1-4.) Here was delicacy, one would say almost to excess, but the apostle acted upon it to the full. Accordingly Titus, the evangelist, was sent with the collection, or rather he offered his services on the occasion. And Paul adds, "and we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the Gospel through all the Churches; and not only so, but who was also *chosen of the Churches to travel with us with this gift*, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord." And then Paul adds, showing the source of his extreme caution, "Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance, which is ministered by us; providing for *honest things*, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also *in the sight of men.*" (2 Cor. viii. 18-21.) We cannot doubt that it was from the same fine delicacy—the gift of the Spirit—that while the bishop or minister of each congregation was one, the deacons were numerous; at least were more than one. In the Church at Jerusalem, even at the outset, there were seven. The duties of deacons being often private, almost confidential, hid from general publicity, it was the more necessary that the trust should not be committed to a single individual. It was chiefly by having a board or court of officers that the Church could have confidence that the funds would be properly applied.

As the office of deacon was restricted to the temporal interests of the Church, so it was permanent in its nature.

It was designed to form a part of the constitution of the Church in all countries and in all ages. Some of the offices, such as those of apostle, evangelist, prophet, &c., were obviously extraordinary—intended to last, like the miraculous spiritual gifts, but for a season, till the Church was brought into a condition to sustain itself, with God's blessing, on the use of outward and ordinary means. But it was otherwise with the office of deacon. Designed as it was to separate what was secular from what was spiritual, and to relieve the spiritual from whatever was suspicious, as well as provide for the poor, it is manifest that this was equally essential in all times and places. If the office of deacon was a good thing at Jerusalem in the first century, it must, on the same ground, be not less important in Scotland in the nineteenth century. Indeed, the reasons which prevail now for having such an office, are superior to those which existed in the first age of Christianity. The temptations to secularity, in connection with the management of the affairs of the Church, have increased, while the high spiritual tone of the infancy of the Gospel has declined. What a rebuke does this anxiety of the apostles to be relieved from even the care of widows, administer to those of their professed successors, who leave the Word of God, and unnecessarily and systematically involve themselves in matters tenfold more secular? If the management of the provision for widows is to be abandoned to a separate and secular officer—a provision which, in some respects, may be called religious—what would they have thought of the almost entire occupation of their time with the mere government of the Church, apart from the grand objects of a Church, or the conduct

of the civil affairs of the State, or the cultivation of a taste for the classics of ancient heathenism? Assuredly no apostle could look upon such a state of things with approbation. It appears, then, that the office of deacon in the Christian Church is a permanent one, and that it is intended so to draw off and exhaust the secular, in its different forms, as to leave the other offices—those of the pastor and ruling elder—free to their appropriate spiritual duties. The same reasons which call for the abandonment of a part of the secular, call for the abandonment of the whole; and the same reasons which demanded the separation between the secular and directly religious in the first age, demand it with enlarged force in the artificial and mercenary age in which we live. So much for the nature of the office. In the Appendix the reader will find an account of the office, as perverted by the Church of England and the Church of Rome. We can scarcely conceive any thing more different from, nay, at more utter variance with the requirements of God's Word.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE GENERAL IMPORTANCE OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON.

THE fact that there is such an office as that of deacon in the Christian Church, is a sufficient proof of its necessity. God does not act without reason; but when we can discover the grounds of the appointment, the result is more satisfactory and convincing. Even though we could not have discovered these, our duty would not have been affected in the least degree.

It might have been thought that, as true religion quickens industry and frugality, by converting them into sacred virtues, as well as by improving the mind—as it saves men from many expensive vanities and vices to which others are exposed—so it would have led to large accumulations of wealth. It certainly operates in this way. The countries where true religion is most prevalent, are also the countries where proportionally there is the largest amount of national resources. Indeed, some outlet is needful, such as in the propagation of the Gospel, for the accumulations which Christianity, by the improvement of the spirit and habits of its adherents, naturally creates. But with all this, it is part of the arrangement of the Great Head of the Church, that in every age, down to the last, there shall be poor. We

are to have the poor with us always, to try the liberality of the rich, to exercise the patience of the indigent—at once to teach gratitude, and humility, and dependence—the sovereignty of God—and that there is no social perfectibility upon earth by an equality of rank and fortune, as infidel philosophers have vainly dreamed. These, and other important ends, are answered by the presence of the poor in the Christian Church. They are also to be regarded as the representatives of Christ upon earth, who chose the deepest poverty, and who wished his people to understand that, in doing a kindness to his poor members, they are conferring a favour upon himself—such is the intimacy of their union. Nor are there only to be the poor in the Christian Church. As there are poor in the world at large, there is to be more than a usual share of poverty. The pride of wealth naturally estranges from true religion, while Christ has ever drawn the largest number of his followers from the humbler walks of life. That persecution too, to which all faithful Christians are exposed, tends to impoverish; hence the necessity of some permanent provision for the poor in the Christian Church. And as the circumstances of so large a body of Christians call for this, so Christianity itself supplies the provision. It is one of the grand points of distinction between true religion and false, or what is substantially the same thing, corruption of the true religion—that the one is essentially liberal—carries us out of ourselves toward others; whereas the other centres all the regards of the mind and heart upon one's self; in other words, is intensely selfish; and, with the exception of some cases, which admit of explanation, makes the unhappy man more and more

selfish the longer he lives. Besides this general tendency of true religion, whether under the Old or New Testament form, to liberalise the heart, there are other considerations in connection with Christianity which tend to the same result. Our blessed Lord does not, like some of his professed followers, make light of temporal wants. He does not, in the magnitude of spiritual necessities, and the urgent duty of providing for them, overlook the ills of poverty. On the contrary, he tenderly cares for and expressly provides for man's temporal necessities. He himself knew, from experience, what poverty is. He calls upon his people continually to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," before presenting any petition for blessing directly personal or spiritual. And instead of absolving his people from any contributions except to moral and religious objects, such as the propagation of the Gospel, he calls upon them to be as liberal, and more liberal than we can suppose the most humane men of the world, from instinctive impulse, even to become. He knows that the wealth which true Christianity is the mean of creating, well directed, is sufficient to meet all legitimate wants, whether temporal or spiritual.

. It is not necessary to say any thing of the tenderness with which the Word of God speaks of the poor—its imperative commands to care for and befriend them—the blessing which is promised to those who consider their case—the curse which is denounced against those who neglect or oppress them; let it only be remembered that Christ calls upon his followers to regard the pious poor as brethren and sisters, by a stronger tie than that of a common nature and common liability to

suffering, as children of the same Father, objects of the same eternal and electing love, and that the awards of the great day of judgment are to turn upon the mode on which men treat the poor members of His body. What can be more fitted to draw forth in a Christian heart the most intense and unwearied sympathy to a poor man, than the thought that, all indigent as he is, and outwardly wretched, he has been chosen of God from eternity to salvation, and that he may be in heaven, at the right hand of the Lamb, before his benefactor? What, at once, more solemnizing and more fitted to open the heart in the warmest benevolence, than to think of the words of the Judge, "*Verily I say unto you, In as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto ME?*" It is plain, then, there is a call for such an office as that of deacon, in as much as we are assured, on the highest authority, that there shall be poor needing its kind office in all ages, and in as much as Christianity provides, in its spirit and principles, for liberality to the poor.

I have, now, farther to remark, that such an office is required, that the liberality which true religion creates may be directed aright, and guarded against becoming a source of evil. This applies not only to the management of the funds for the poor, but to the general pecuniary revenues of the Church. I do not here refer to the dangers of wealth in the hands of superstition—to the mendicancy which the Church of Rome, in a variety of ways, creates—spreading hosts of beggars, clerical and lay, over the richest countries of the earth; and to the means which she then takes to supply the indigence which she has called into existence—ways

which ever tend to aggrandise the priesthood, and to add to the power of the Church. Nor do I refer to her prodigious accumulations of property for the support and extension of her system of superstition, idolatry, and despotism, to the ends of the world. Men may doubt whether she deserves the name of Christian, and whether, in writing of the officers of the Christian Church, her character and history should not be thrown out of the reckoning. But it is well to remember that, before the days of the Church of Rome, at least before she had risen to dangerous supremacy, in the pure and peaceful times, as they are accounted, of primitive Christianity, the most serious evils arose in the Christian Church, from the ill-regulated accumulation of wealth. Milton somewhere justly remarks, that the Church was corrupted by money before she was corrupted by power. Where it is necessary that wealth, whether for the support of the poor, or the maintenance of the ministry, or the general extension of the Church, shall be collected together, and employed by Christians, it is almost essential that there be a body of men, whose distinct office and care it shall be to administer the funds, and who shall be responsible to the Church. If there be no regulation of so important a matter—if large and ever-growing sums be committed to individuals, or to the pastor burdened with other duties, or to volunteer and almost irresponsible managers, or to ill-defined associations, it is evident, let the Church be as Christian as it may, sound in doctrine and public ordinances, it will not long remain so,—that, constituted as human nature is, corruption in a variety of forms, some of them, at the outset, quite innocent, will certainly and speedily enter; and that a mercenary spirit

and corrupt administration will, ere long, vitiate doctrine, and mould it to their own purposes.

What the nature of things, even among Christians, would thus lead us to expect, the history of the Christian Church amply establishes. Without meaning to anticipate, it may be mentioned that, in the second century, not a great many years after the apostle John had closed his eyes upon the world, the Christian Church at Rome, the metropolis of the world, was so overflowing in wealth, that she not only supported her own clergy and poor, but largely aided other churches, subsisted multitudes of Christian captives in several provinces, and even the Christian prisoners condemned to labour and perish in the mines. The impression which then prevailed, and which many Fathers afterwards diligently propagated, that the end of the world was at hand, conduced to this excessive liberality. When men, who were persecuted for their faith, believed that, at all events, the present state of things would not survive two or three years, it is not wonderful they willingly, nay lavishly, parted with their worldly treasures. Indeed, in the third century, such were the pecuniary resources of the Christian Church, that they tempted the avarice or necessities of the imperial power. Now, though there were peculiarities in the case referred to, yet it plainly shows the absolute necessity of regulating the wealth of the Church, and *that* by a court of officers forming a constitutional part of the Church itself. There may, indeed there were scriptural deacons in the second century, but ere long, in the third, their office was seriously changed. They were distracted in their appropriate duties, by having part of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments

devolved on them, while the office of Ruling elder^A—unpopular because a restraint upon corruption, and which, as held by a large body of intelligent men, would have operated as an indirect check upon mismanagement on the part of the deacon—began to disappear. As time rolled on, and the wealth of the Church accumulated, the traces of the scriptural deacon, though sufficiently clear to mark the original office, became more and more indistinct, till, absorbed into an order of priesthood, its wealth and power at last centred in the bishop, or the bishop of bishops—the Pope.

It appears, then, that the very liberality which Christianity recommends and creates, needs to be well regulated by suitable church-officers; that, apart from this, it is liable to, and soon degenerates into serious corruption. Surely this is a strong reason for maintaining the order of deacons in its exclusively scriptural functions. Doubtless the Great Head of the Church foresaw and meant to provide against the dangers of unregulated wealth by the creation of such a class of office-bearers. Were it necessary to say any thing more in behalf of the deacon, it would be found in the circumstance, that the special care of the poor, in an official form, is conducive to the credit of Christianity. It is well known how much the men of the world pride themselves upon their charities, and how often they charge religious men, very falsely it is true, but still charge them with being indifferent to the temporal wants of the poor. That men of the world some times do very generous things, and occasionally leave considerable sums, by testamentary bequest, to charitable objects, may be true. When one expects the salvation of his soul in consequence of alms-deeds, it is not won-

derful that he should be generous. The Mahommedan, who is taught by the Koran that charity opens the gates of heaven, is frequently eminent for his donations to men of the same faith and nation with himself; so is the unbelieving Jew. But whatever may be the influence of instinctive feeling or self-righteous hope, it is unquestionable that the Christian, notwithstanding the large demands which are made upon him for religious objects—objects with which the men of the world do not intermeddle, yet proportionally contributes far more liberally to the temporal necessities of his fellow-men and fellow-Christians, than others. The very habit of giving encourages it, and the constraining love of Christ is not inconsistent with instinctive sympathy, but may act in the same direction. Though these things may be known by all who take the pains to consider them, the world still professes itself to be the friend of the poor man, to the disparagement of the Christian. It holds that it deals in substantial kindness, while the other contents himself with faith, as distinguished from morality. To meet this common charge it is most desirable, for the honour of Christianity and the Christian Church, that they be seen in their true character as the patrons of the poor, especially the pious poor; and how can this be better done than when it appears that a court of officers, to watch over the interests of the poor, in the spirit of Christianity, is an essential part of the constitution of the Christian Church? So long as the Church cannot point to these officers in living operation under her authority, she wants the full answer which she may and ought to have it in her power to return to the charges and insinuations, whether of worldliness, or su-

perstition, or infidelity. It is not enough to say that Christians are charitable—far more charitable than others, unless it can be shown that the poor are so important in their eyes, and dear to their hearts, that they have a regular official provision in the very structure of the Christian Church for attending to their wants, and that men are failing in Christian duty where this, in one form or another, is wanting. Let, however, the Christian Church be fully equipped with a large staff of laborious tender-hearted deacons, watching over the poor from week to week and year to year, ministering to their wants out of the donations of the Church, and treating them with the kindness of brethren and sisters; and what is there in any occasional charitable bequest, any regular and extraordinary deed of benevolence, on the part of the men of the world, which could bear any comparison with such friendship? Tried by this test, Christianity would not only be acquitted of indifference—its genuine liberality would be established and rendered conspicuous. We can conceive few things more dishonourable to Protestant Christianity, or more fitted to impair its progress, than to be able to say, with apparent truth, that it is careless of the interests of the poor—more careless than the men who make less pretension. And, on the other hand, we can conceive few things more fitted to propitiate the good-will of the world, which, at all events, admires benevolence, than to be able, in a way which does not admit of cavil, to show that the same religious system which alone can provide for the welfare of eternity, is the most active and unwearied guardian of the poor man's interest in time. This is an argument which must always be powerful, but particularly in such a day

as the present, when it is to be feared irreligion and infidelity prevail to a considerable extent among the humbler classes of society—classes which were once happily strangers to the poison, and which are naturally led, from their very circumstances, to make comparisons of men and systems in connection with their care for the poor, and to consider this as almost the exclusive standard of character.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE OFFICE OF
DEACON.

THOUGH the word deacon means a servant in general, and is in Scripture applied to the servants of God, whether in a more public or private capacity,—to the ministry of the Gospel, the civil magistrate, and even to our Lord himself, who is called “a servant or minister of the circumcision,” because a Jew, as regarded his human nature, he confined his ministry to the children of Israel,—yet it is the name also of a distinct ecclesiastical office. There is no question about this. It is too clear to be disputed. In the Book of the Acts we have a detailed account of the institution. The epistle to the Church at Philippi is specially sent to the *deacons* and ministers of the Gospel in that city; and the same writer, in his First Epistle to Timothy, after describing the character and qualifications of a faithful minister, describes not less clearly those of the *deacon*; evidently showing that the offices were not only distinct, but permanent in the Christian Church. The office of deacon was to be as lasting as that of minister, and hence the counsels which are given to Timothy in regard to it; the nature of the office is as well marked as the office itself. It has no concern with the preaching of the

Gospel, or the administration of sacraments. There is not the slightest authority for this in the Word of God; nay, it is directly hostile to its teaching. The deacon was appointed (see the sixth of the Acts), not because there was not a sufficient number of ministers of the Gospel, but because it was indispensable to make provision for the temporal wants of the poorer Christians, on a different plan than had hitherto been pursued. The same reasons which called for the institution of such an office at Jerusalem, rendered it necessary in other quarters. Hence the apostle Paul addresses the deacons as well as the bishops of Philippi.*—(Phil. i. 1.) In the account, again, of the qualifications of deacons, in his first letter to Timothy, there is not the slightest allusion to the preaching of the Gospel and the dispensation of the sacraments. It is not said of the deacon, as it is of the bishop or pastor, that he is to be "apt to teach;" nor is it said that he is to "care for," by ruling the Church of God. These belong to the bishop or minister. The deacon's qualifications are summed up in those things most appropriate to the office of one who has the charge of the poor and the secular affairs of the Church generally: "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let them also first be proved, then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Let the deacons be the husband of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office

* This is a proof, by the way, that the bishops in apostolic times were but ministers of the Gospel, of whom, it would seem, there were more than one at Philippi. It would be absurd to suppose, that in the sense of modern Episcopacy, there were *several* diocesan bishops in one town, and that in the beginning of the Gospel times.

of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

From these words several important points are apparent. It is obvious that though the calling of the deacon, comparatively speaking, be secular, yet that he must be a man of intelligent piety, and generally esteemed; that he has nothing to do with the teaching or government of the Church, or administration of ordinances, otherwise such important duties would not have been overlooked. The caution against being double-tongued and given to wine, and the love of gain; and the exhortation to proved fidelity, are all peculiarly appropriate to one invested with the charge of public funds. Nor is there any thing inconsistent with propriety in the deacon, having served his office well, being raised to that of the ruling elder, and, with suitable education, even to the ministry of the Gospel. Such cases are not unfrequent in the Church of Scotland. It may be worthy of notice, that while the counsels given regarding the bishop are in the singular number, implying that the Church has *one* pastor, the deacons are spoken of in the plural number, intimating that there were several in each Church. This harmonizes with the idea that the deacon is the guardian of the interests of the poor, which need several. It is inconsistent with the notion that he is a preacher and dispenser of baptism. Other passages might be referred to, such as the 12th of the Romans, where "he that giveth"—evidently marking the deacon—is called upon to give "with simplicity;" and the 12th of 1st Corinthians, which, under the term "helps," describes the same class of office-bearers; but we prefer to direct the reader's attention to the original

institution. It is too plain, and is given with too much detail, to admit of any misunderstanding.

It would seem that at a very early period in the history of the Christian Church, before Peter had set out on his first evangelistic journey, or Saul had been converted, it was necessary to make some permanent arrangement for the support of the poor Christians. Under the remarkable influence of the Gospel, a self-denial and generosity had been manifested by the members of the Christian Church generally, which was perhaps unparalleled in the history of the world. Men parted with all that they had, selling even estates, and placing the proceeds at the disposal of the apostles. While this showed the most ample confidence in the teachers, it necessarily exposed the apostles to a great deal of trouble and delicate management. They must, from the outset, one would think, have appointed some of the converts to assist them, but it soon became manifest that a permanent arrangement was indispensable. Either from mere oversight, or from the converted Jews of Judea preponderating in number, so it was that suspicions and murmurs soon got up among the converted Jews from foreign parts, who spoke the Greek language, that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. In all probability the charge was an unfounded one; but to provide against it and all similar surmises, so injurious to the cause of Christianity, and fitted so quickly to destroy the spirit of pre-eminent harmony and love which characterised the first Christians, the apostles considered it proper that officers should be appointed for the express purpose of taking charge of the poor and the general finance of the Church. As a thing right in itself, and to give the people the

greater confidence in the deacons, the people were called upon to elect. Having been informed by the apostles of what were the necessary qualifications, they selected seven ; and so well did the people choose, that Stephen, the first, and one of the noblest of Christian martyrs, was in the number. The better to reassure the complaining Hellenists, the disciples seem generally to have voted for persons belonging to their party, and hence the names are Greek names. Nothing can be clearer than these statements. The origin of the office explains its nature. We have not the slightest hint of preaching or baptizing. Traces of these may appear, in connection with the office of deacon, in Ecclesiastical history, but they must be found in the Word of God ere any weight can be attached to them.

Dr Neander does not think, that from the expression "serving tables," it can be certainly inferred that the apostles alluded only to the distribution of *food* among the poor widows. He considers this merely one of the tables of service which they performed, and that it is mentioned to mark more pointedly the distinction between the oversight of spiritual and that of secular concerns.

It is plain, from Scripture, that the whole work of the deacon regarded the secular affairs of the Church, chiefly the care of the poor. This is, if possible, made more manifest by the circumstance that there seem to have been female deacons, or deaconesses, in the early Church. Paul, in the 16th of Romans, ver. 1, commands Phœbe, a deaconess, to the attention of the Christians at Rome. Her office, we may believe, would correspond to that of the deacon, and as she is expressly forbidden, on reasons assigned, to teach publicly in the Church, the inference

is obvious, that he was equally unauthorised to undertake this duty, and if not permitted to preach the Word, much less, may we believe, would he be permitted to administer baptism or the Lord's supper. We have very little knowledge of the female deacon in Scripture, the passage in Romans being the only one where it is distinctly stated, but its very existence implies a corresponding office among male members of the Church. Probably it was intended to meet the peculiar circumstances of some Gentile Church, in which, as in the East generally, strong jealousies prevailed in connection with the female sex. It is well known how anxious the heathen were to disparage the claims of Christianity, by misrepresenting the character of its professors. The discharge of the duty of a deacon, in giving money to poor females, might, in such circumstances, be open to misrepresentation, and hence the wisdom and delicacy of appointing females to minister to their relief.

The only thing which is or can be alleged from Scripture in behalf of the deacon being a preacher and administrator of ordinances, is the fact that Philip, one of the seven original deacons at Jerusalem, preached the Gospel in Samaria, and baptized the eunuch of Ethiopia. But the question is, did he preach or baptize in the character of deacon? Did preaching or baptizing form any part of the original institution of the deaconship? It is not unknown among the offices of the New Testament, that a man should hold two, and sometimes act in the character of the one, and sometimes in that of the other. Thus, both Peter and John, who were apostles, and so possessed an extraordinary office, which could not be transmitted to others, were at the same time, as

they themselves inform us, "elders" or presbyters, —pastors—ordinary ministers—in which capacity they could have successors, and transmit powers to all faithful ministers lawfully called, to preach the same Gospel truth. Though Philip, then, was a deacon, this did not preclude him holding another office, and what that is, we are informed in Acts xxi. 8, where he is expressly called an Evangelist, an extraordinary office, which constituted him who bore it the companion and assistant of apostles, able to confer miraculous gifts on others, &c. It was as evangelist, then, not as deacon, that Philip preached and baptized; and this is the more certain, when it is remembered that the office of deacon was, as might have been expected, regarded as the humblest in the Christian Church, and, where its duties were well discharged, opened the way to a higher office. The Apostle Paul, when treating of the subject, expressly says, "They that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree." There can be little question then, that Philip, having acquitted himself excellently as a deacon at Jerusalem, when the persecution arose with the death of Stephen, was clothed with the higher office of Evangelist. It is certain that we find him travelling about as a missionary in Samaria, during which time he could not be acting the part of a deacon, attending to the wants of the poor widows at Jerusalem. When we next meet with him, at the distance of 20 years, he is resident at Cesarea, and bears the name of an Evangelist—a residence which would equally unfit him for the deaconship to which he had been originally appointed. In connection with Philip's being denominated an evangelist, it may be

noticed that, in Paul's summary of offices, "for the perfecting of the saints," &c., there is no mention of the deacon, which might have been expected had that office embraced preaching and baptizing, with the care of the poor. It is said, "And he," viz., the Lord Jesus, "gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers"—evidently including the ordinary as well as the extraordinary offices—"for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." There is no reference to a preaching or baptizing deacon.

The case of Stephen, another of the seven, is sometimes appealed to. It is said that his address was uttered as a preacher ; but there is not the slightest evidence of this. He defended himself at the bar of his enemies as any other good man, as any humble female might have done in the same circumstances. Nothing of a public official character appears. Indeed, it would be the duty of all private Christians to lift up a similar testimony for Christ at the present day, were they persecuted in the same way. If the discourse of Stephen constitutes him an ordained preacher of the Word, and administrator of its ordinances, then all the martyrs of Scotland, and of every other land, male and female, have, in the same sense, been clothed with the pastoral office. Few pretences can be more absurd than that the deaconship involved more than the care of secular interests. Well may we conclude with Thomas Scott, the commentator on the Scriptures, and a minister of the Church of England, that the office of deacon was evidently intended to take care of the *property*, not of the *pastoral care*, of the Church.

CHAPTER IV.

TESTIMONY OF ANCIENT ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY TO THE OFFICE OF DEACON.

PART I.

WITH regard to the primitive Church, there seems no reason to doubt that, in its earliest and purest times, the scriptural office of deacon was recognised and maintained in its purity. Whether it was so or not, is of little consequence as a matter of evidence, in as much as, with all sound Protestants, where the testimony of Scripture is clear, the question is at an end, whatever may have been the views or the practice of a fallible church and fallible men in after ages. It is obvious, from the inspired record, that the Christians in apostolic times were called upon to lay by a portion of their property on the first day of the week, as God had prospered them, for the service of the Church and of the poor. This, as a fixed practice in the Church, of which every Sabbath, as well as the wants of their Christian brethren and sisters, reminded them, was not likely soon to be forgotten. Accordingly, down to the age of the emperor Julian, the apostate, in the middle of the fourth century (A.D. 350), it appears that the practice was universal. It was this which led the heathen to exclaim, "Behold how these Christians love one another;" and it was this which led Julian to say, "It is a shame that,

when the impious Galileans relieve not only their own people, but ours also, *our poor* should be neglected by us." And again, "Beginning with their love-feasts and the necessity of tables (for not only the name, but the thing is *common* among them), they have drawn away the faithful to impiety"—that is, heathens to Christianity. No testimony could be more unexceptionable to a notorious fact. So systematic a procedure points to an appropriate office.

To descend to more specific testimonies which name the office of deacon: there is not only nothing said (so far as I have been able to discover) in the strongest passages bearing on the constitution of the Christian Church, for the first 200 years after Christ, inconsistent with the scriptural views of the office, but the allusions of Clemens Romanus, Hermes, Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Clemens Alexandrinus, the primitive writers of that period, are all in strict accordance with the ecclesiastico-secular nature of the deaconship. No candid man reading their testimonies, or rather allusions, would ever dream of a preaching and baptizing deacon. Even in Ignatius, supposing the epistles attributed to him trustworthy, there are certainly three offices spoken of. The three Presbyterian offices of pastor, ruling elder, and deacon, however, are as natural an explanation as any other. An unwarrantable change in the nature of the office took place about the middle of the third century (A. D. 250); but before, at, and after that date, testimonies can be quoted indicating how the office was contemplated by the apostolic Church. Though few men, who have even partially explored antiquity, and who are acquainted with the corruptions

of the third century, will care much for authorities after the A.D. 200; yet we may subjoin one or two notices. The traces of incipient error will become the more apparent. Tertullian, A.D. 200, writing of baptism, says, "The right of giving this ordinance belongs to the highest priest, who is the bishop, then to elders *and deacons*, yet not without the authority of the bishop, for the sake of the honour of the Church." This being secured, peace is secured, otherwise even the laity have the right. This plainly shows that, in the time of Tertullian, the deacon did not baptize as the deacon in the Church of England now does, as a right belonging to his office—that it was merely a permission from the bishop or minister in cases of necessity, cases of such necessity that even private Christians might baptize. This indirectly proves that the deacon's office was still confined to the serving of tables.

Cyprian, A.D. 250, in his 73d Epistle, says, "Whence we understand that it is lawful for none but the presidents of the Church (that is the pastors) to baptize and grant remission of sins." Of course, this excludes the baptizing deacon; while the passage incidentally shows that Cyprian's bishop or president of the Church is just the parochial pastor. None will contend that the diocesan bishop alone can baptize. Firmilian, a contemporary of Cyprian, in the 75th Epistle of the latter, could be quoted to the same effect.

The Rev. Mr Riddle, a minister of the Church of England, in his "Ecclesiastical Chronology," under date A.D. 286, says, "The apostolic constitutions and canons are generally supposed to be a forgery of about this date." They probably contain remnants of earlier compositions, but the work as a whole, although attributed to Clement

of Rome, appears to have been compiled towards the close of this century, with a view to support the fictitious pretensions of bishops, and to assist the growth of Episcopal power. Many Episcopal writers found much upon this work; and no wonder, since it smiles upon their favourite views. Yet such notices of the office of deacon occur as the following:—"The deacon must give nothing to any poor man without the bishop's knowledge and consent;" evidently intimating that his business lay with the distribution of charity. "If any be found sitting out of his own place, let the deacon reprove him, and let him be conducted to a proper place. Let the deacons take care that none whisper, sleep, laugh, nod, &c. After the catechumens and penitents have retired, let the deacons prepare for the celebration of the Eucharist." Here the deacons are represented, not as an order of priesthood presiding, but rather as taking a subordinate charge of the external order and decorum of the Church—such as would comport with a secular office.

JEROME, A.D. 360, one of the most pious and learned of the Fathers, asks, in his letter to Evragius, when condemning a person who had raised deacons above presbyters, "Who can endure it, that a minister of tables and of widows should proudly exalt himself above those at whose prayers the body and blood of Christ is made?" plainly excluding deacons from being an order of the clergy. I might refer to various additional testimonies quoted by Rutherford, in his "Due Right of Presbytery"—such as Sozomen's, that the office of the deacon was to keep the Church's goods; Eusebius, that the care of the poor, and the keeping of the Church and its vessels, were committed to the

deacons ; Ruffinus, that *when there was no presbyter, that is elder, present*, the deacons might distribute the elements of the Lord's Supper ; but it is unnecessary. I may merely state, that the sixth General Council of Constantinople, A.D. 692, acknowledged "*the Scripture deacons to be no other than overseers of the poor, and that this was the opinion of the ancient fathers*"—(Canon 16.) What a change, then, must notoriously have taken place by this time on the original constitution of the Christian Church ! Neander, the celebrated German professor of Church History, in his "History of the Christian Church," p. 40, says, "Though many other *secular* employments were added to the original one, yet the fundamental principle (the relief of the poor), as well as the name of the office remained. In later times (referring to Cyprian and Origen), we still find traces of the distribution of alms being considered as the *peculiar* employment of deacons."

Do any, after all, wonder how an office plainly secular should, so early as the middle of the third century, be changed in its nature into the spiritual. We beg to assure them that, to one acquainted with the general state of the early Church, there is nothing in this circumstance to awaken incredulity. By this time, apart from doctrine, serious corruptions had been introduced into the practice of the Church. In the third century, Cyprian speaks of the administration of the Lord's Supper to infants as a common practice ; while, within 50 years from the apostles, water was mixed with the wine used in the Supper, and ere long this was contended for as a *divine* institution ! Before the close of the second century, subdeacons, acolythes, exorcists, and other lower officers, quite unknown in the apostolic Church, had

vicars." What a change was this from the deacon of apostolic times—the meek dispenser to the poor turned into the representative and image of lordly bishops, who ruled the clergy of the Church with a rod of iron! As the religious houses multiplied, and at once created and fed crowds of the poor, the office of deacon, in its scriptural meaning, gradually perished.

To do better, in concluding this part of the subject, I will quote the words of a prelate of the Church of England. The bishop (Croft), in his work entitled, "The duty of a bishop," p. 49, says, "Whether this of deaconry was ever called an order or an office, but certainly an order; for their office was to serve tables, as the apostles used to do, in plain English, is nothing more than to be the eyes and ears of the poor, to distribute justly and liberally the alms of the faithful, which the apostles forbade themselves withal, lest it should hinder the ministration of the word and prayer. In matters of this world, in process of time, far from the original constitution, so it fell into disuse; for the bishops, who pretended to be successors to the apostles, by little and little, took upon themselves the dispensation of alms,—first, by way of favour to the poor, but at length the total suppression of the deacons, who were mere lay brethren, crept into the Church ministration, and so the office of deacon, a reputed spiritual order, and a necessary step to the priesthood, of which I can find nothing in scripture and the original institution, nor a trace to any thing but the ordering of alms for the poor." For additional extracts from this rare treatise, see the appendix.

CHAPTER V.

TESTIMONY OF MODERN ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY
TO THE OFFICE OF DEACON.

PART II.—CHURCHES OF THE REFORMATION.

WHEN the Reformation of the 16th century dawned, and men, abandoning human traditions, reverted to the Word of God as the exclusive standard, they clearly saw the wisdom and obligation of the office of deacon, as a permanent institution of the Christian Church, and proceeded forthwith to revive it in the Churches which they were honoured to rear. Indeed, ages before the Reformation, strictly so called, the Waldenses bore testimony to the office of deacon. They reach up almost to apostolic times; and yet Gillis, one of their historians and pastors, gives us the confession of their ancient as well as modern faith, from which these words are an extract:—Art. 31, “It is necessary for the Church to have pastors esteemed sufficiently learned and exemplary in their conduct, as well to preach God’s Word as to administer the sacraments, and watch over the sheep of Jesus Christ; together with the elders *and deacons*, according to the rules of good and holy Church discipline, and the practice of the primitive Church.” There is not a word here of preaching and baptizing deacons. On the contrary, this usurpation is excluded.

Wickliffe, “the Morning Star of the Reformation,” its

precursor by nearly 200 years, held that there are but two orders of clergy—the priest and the deacon—and disclaims the bishops, with the many other varieties of imparity. It is probable that, by orders of clergy here, he meant to be popularly understood as speaking of office-bearers in the Church.

Tyndal, A.D. 1526, the first translator of the Scriptures into English, and very appropriately a martyr for his work, after speaking of the bishop or presbyter in the primitive Church, says, “Another officer they chose, and called him deacon, after the Greek—a minister in English—to *minister alms to the poor*.” Lambert, a martyr of the same reign, could be appealed to to the same purpose; and so might Archbishop Cranmer, and many of his prelatie brethren, in “The Institution of a Christian Man,” which they approved and published in 1537, and which maintains that there are only two orders, *deacons* and presbyters. From the view which is given of the pastoral and ministerial functions of the presbyter, it is plain that the other office points to a different class of duties. Turning from Britain to the Continent, we find Ursinus in Germany, the learned contemporary of Luther and Melancthon, accurately describe the different office-bearers of the Church as a Presbyterian would do, and conclude by describing the deacons “as ministers (or servants) elected by the Church to *take care of the poor and distribute alms*.” Buddæus, another Lutheran, and eminent professor of divinity at Leipsic, giving an account of the government of his own church, mentions the office of deacon, and asserts that it had been perverted, in process of time, from the *guardianship of the poor*, to which it had

been expressly devoted by the apostles. In accordance with these views, the Lutheran Church, after all the decline which it has experienced, adheres to the office of deacon, not as an order of clergy, but as a guardian of the poor, and, at the present day, administers their affairs through deacons in every congregation. So little foundation is there for the idea of a clerical order of deacons, that, if I am not misinformed, even the modern Swedish Church, which is practically Episcopalian in its government, disclaims the notion of deacons as an order of ministers.

If we now pass to the Genevan and Swiss Churches, we shall be at no loss to ascertain their sentiments on the subject of the deaconship. Calvin, the great reformer, to whom these and all the Churches of the Reformation were deeply indebted, expresses himself with his usual clearness and decision. In his celebrated "Institutes," published in 1536, he says (Book iv. chap. 3), in speaking of the permanent offices of the Church,—

"The care of the poor is committed to the deacons. Although the word deacon has a more extensive meaning, yet the Scriptures expressly call *them* deacons to whom the Church has given in charge the distribution of alms and the care of the poor; and hath appointed them, as it were, stewards of the common treasury of the poor, whose origin, institution, and office, are described by Luke, in Acts vi., &c., &c. Behold what manner of deacons the apostolic Church had, and what manner of deacons it becomes us to have, in conformity to their example." Again (Book iv. chap. 5), there is the following passage, in which he condemns the unscriptural views of the office entertained by Prelatic churches:—

“ Now let the deacons come forth, and that holy distribution which they have of the Church’s goods : although they by no means, at present, create their deacons for that purpose, for they (viz., the Roman Catholics) enjoin upon them nothing else but to minister at the altar, to read or sing the gospels, and to perform, I know not what, trifles. Nothing of the *alms*, nothing of the care of the poor, nothing of the *whole function* which in former times they executed. I speak of the very institution ; for if we have a respect to what they do, it is not in itself an office, but only a step towards the priesthood. *Therefore, they mock the Church with this lying deaconry.* Truly therein they have nothing like either the institution of the apostles or ancient usage.”

In accordance with these views, we find that the Second Confession of the Helvetic (Swiss) Churches, published in 1566, strongly condemns unauthorised offices in the Church, in these terms :—“ In process of time there were many more ministers brought into the Church. For some were created patriarchs, others archbishops, others suffragans, others metropolitans, archpriests, deacons, subdeacons, acolythes, exorcists, queristers, pastors, and I know not what a rabble besides. Cardinals, provosts, and priors ; abbots, greater and lesser ; governors, higher and lower ; but touching all these, we pass not a rush what they have been in time past, or what they are now. It is not sufficient for us. Forasmuch as concerneth ministers, we have the doctrine of the apostles.”—*Harmony of Confessions*, chap. xviii., p. 235 ; London, 1643. The same admirable document, in reference to the point more immedi-

ately before us, under the head of the "Goods of the Church," has these sentences:—"The true use of the Church goods was, and now is, to maintain learning in schools and in holy assemblies, with all the service, rites, and buildings of the Church; finally, to maintain teachers, scholars, and ministers, with other necessary things; and chiefly for the succour and relief of the poor. But for the lawful dispensing of these ecclesiastical goods, *let men be chosen that fear God, wise men, and such as are of good report for government of their families.* But if the goods of the Church, by injury of the time, and the boldness, ignorance, or covetousness of some, be turned to any abuse, let them be restored again, by godly and wise men, unto their holy use, for they must not wink at so impious an abuse. Therefore we teach, that schools and colleges wherein corruption is crept in doctrine, in the service of God, and in manners, must be reformed—that there must order be taken *godlily, faithfully, and wisely, for the relief of the poor.*"—(Cap. xxviii. p. 355–6.) It is plain, from the Scripture qualifications referred to, that the men spoken of in the above paragraphs are the deacons; indeed, they are elsewhere denominated "the overseers and watchmen of the Church, who did distribute food and other necessities of the Church." It may be noticed, in passing, that there was a peculiar call for such an office as that of deacon at the period of the Reformation, and for many years after. Independently of Scripture obligation, and the care of the poor, it was urgently necessary to guard the general patrimony of the Church against neglect, and also to prevent dilapidation and alienations. This duty could not be well

attended to by the ministers and elders without injury to their spiritual office, and hence the propriety of committing it to the deacon. To give the greater weight to the views of the Helvetic Confession, it may be stated that it was approved and subscribed, not only by the Tigurines (inhabitants of Zurich) themselves, and their confederates of Berne, Scaphusia, Sangallia, Rhetia, Milan, and Bienna, but Geneva, Savoy, Poland, and likewise the Churches of Hungary and Scotland.

If from Switzerland we pass to France, and ask what were the views of its illustrious Protestant Church on the subject of the deacon—a Church which produced many of the most able and learned ministers to whom the Reformation gave birth—we find its sentiments contained in these words:—Art. 29, “We believe that the true Church ought to be governed by that regiment or discipline which our Lord Jesus hath established, to wit, so that there be in it pastors, elders, and deacons, that the purity of the doctrines may be retained—vices repressed—*the poor, and others that be in misery, according to their necessity, may be provided for*—and that there may be holy meetings for the edifying both of small and great.”—(*Harmony*, p. 253.) It is well known that there is fearful mendicancy, especially in particular districts of France,—not an occasional but constant evil. There can be little question that it is the Popery of the land, and not any thing in the character of the people or constitution of the country, which lies at the root of it. Few men were ever more noted for their industry and skill than the French Protestants. Some of the most honoured names in the United States, whither they were driven by persecution, belong to the number. Most

of the countries of Europe, too, have been indebted to their perseverance and ingenuity. The French Church seems to have made extensive use of the office of deacon. In the account of "the Ecclesiastical Discipline of the Reformed Churches in France" (London, 1642), there are two chapters devoted to an exposition of their duties; a number of important points also, connected with the administration of the office, are authoritatively determined. We are informed that "the office and duty of the deacons is to receive, gather, and distribute, by the advice of the consistory, the monies of the poor, the prisoners, and the sick; and to visit and take care of them. The office of deacon is not to preach the Word of God nor to administer the sacraments; yet, nevertheless, *for the necessity of the time*, may the consistory elect and choose both some elders and deacons, to catechise in the households; they are forbid, however, to catechise publicly; are exhorted to exercise the office as long as they can; and are guarded against pretending to any supremacy or domination over one another."

The spirit and language of the Confession of the Belgic Churches, formed in 1566, are similar to those of their French brethren. The Confession was revised and approved by the Dutch Synod of Dort, in 1618 and 1619. "We believe," say the Protestant Presbyterians of Belgium, "that this true Church ought to be governed by that spiritual regiment which our Lord hath taught us in his Word, viz., that there be ministers or pastors to preach God's Word and to administer the sacraments; that there be also elders and deacons, who, together with the pastors, might make up, as it were, an ecclesiastical senate; that by these means true religion might be pre-

served, and true doctrine propagated every where; that offenders be censured and restrained in a spiritual way; *that likewise the poor and afflicted be relieved with aid and comfort, according to the several necessities of every one*; so that all things in the Church be done decently and in order, when faithful men shall be chosen according to the rule prescribed by Paul in the Epistle to Timothy."—*Ecclesiastical Discipline*, p. 62.

The Dutch Church is not less clear. Junius, one of its earliest and most learned professors of divinity, a contemporary of the first reformers, writes fully on the subject of Church government. He maintains that pastors, ruling elders, and deacons, are the only three scriptural orders of Church officers, that they are set forth in the Word of God, and existed in the primitive Church. Of deacons he says, that they "are appointed to collect and distribute the alms of the Church." At a later day, three eminent professors of theology, Polyander, Thysius, and Walæus, in a joint work (*"Synopsis Theologiæ Disputat."* 42), maintain the same doctrine. They contend that the deacon is of apostolic institution—that he is intrusted with the Church's treasure—that it is his duty to take care of the poor. They expressly declare that they considered the Church of Holland, in retaining these officers, as following the example of the Apostolic Church.

Passing from the testimony of individuals to more authoritative documents, we find that the Synod of Dort, composed of some of the most learned divines who were ever assembled, several from foreign countries, solemnly declaring that the true Church must be governed by that spiritual policy which our Lord hath taught in his Word,

and that it comprehends "elders and *deacons*, who, together with the pastor, form the council of the Church."—*Netherlands Confession*, Art. 30. And still farther, in the "*Corpus Disciplinæ*" of the Dutch Churches (London, 1645, pp. 3, 4), there is a section devoted to *deacons*. The following are some of the points:—"Their office is diligently to collect and preserve the alms and other means belonging to the poor; they are to distribute the same, faithfully and discreetly, according to the need of such as are in want, whether inhabitants or strangers, by common consent and plurality of voices; to visit and comfort the needy, and to look that the alms be not misemployed." The form for ordaining elders and deacons is given in four pages (37-41). The same "discipline" is observed by the Dutch Churches in Britain, as well as in their native country.

In harmony with these things, it appears from Dr Stevens' "*Brief View of the Dutch Ecclesiastical Establishment*," 1838, that the office of deacon is in vigorous operation in the Dutch Church at the present day. Those who hold it in larger towns, have a court of meeting of their own, and so important is the office deemed, that in conjunction with the elders, the deacons have the appointment of the ministry. It is doubtless in part owing to the importance attached to the office, and its excellent services, that the poor of Holland are, it is generally understood, among the best attended to in Europe.

It is unnecessary to refer to the testimony of other Reformed Churches. That of Scotland will be considered separately. It may simply be mentioned, that the Puritan or Presbyterian Church of England of the 17th

century, entered into the same views of the office of deacon as the earlier Churches of the Reformation. The form of Church government agreed upon at Westminster, and adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1645, is an ample proof of this; as also the writings of the Presbyterian ministers of London, who always contended for the office of deacon as distinct from others, and permanent in the Christian Church.—*Vide Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiasticæ*. London, 1646, pp. 160, 161.

In concluding this part of the subject, and in connection with the above, it may be noticed that the Non-conformists of New England did not differ from their brethren in this country. On some points of Church government there may have been diversity of opinion, but here they were at one. In the platform of Church government agreed upon at Cambridge, in 1649, the deacon is spoken of in these terms:—"The office and work of a deacon is to receive the offerings of the Church, gifts given to the Church, and to keep the treasury of the Church, and therewith to serve the tables which the Church is to provide for, as the Lord's table, the table of the ministers, and of such as are in necessity, to whom they are to distribute in simplicity. The office, therefore, being limited unto the care of the temporal good things of the Church, it extends not to the attendance upon and administration of the spiritual things thereof, as the word, the sacraments, and the like."—(Cap. viii.) Under the title of "Heads of agreement assented to by the United Ministers, formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational," we find, that upon the office of deacon they are entirely at one.

It may be added that, with inconsiderable exceptions, the Congregational Churches, both of this country and of the United States, have in all ages agreed with the Presbyterian Church throughout the world in regard to the deacon. In many cases, from particular circumstances, the power of the deacon may have been, and may be, too extensive as compared with pastors, and he may be admitted to the function of teaching and exhorting; but in this case, it is not *as deacon*, but as Christian brother, that he teaches. In almost every case, the principle is, that the office of deacon is a secular office, and has no connection with the preaching of the word or the administration of the sacraments. This, we maintain, is the indubitable doctrine of Scripture on the point. Hence it appears that the whole Presbyterian and Congregational Churches of the world, forming a vast proportion of the entire Protestant communion, though differing upon other points, are here unanimous. Surely this is no small testimony in behalf of the office as a scriptural office, the more especially when taken in connection with the views of the Churches of the Reformation from the earliest periods. On the other hand, surely it is little to say of any Protestant Church, that, looking through Christendom, she can find none but the Church of Rome to countenance her in her views of an important office in the Church of Christ,—an office, upon the correct administration of which, the most important results are suspended. Whether is it the more likely that the harmony is the harmony of the truth, or the harmony of error?

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS, AND MODE
OF APPOINTMENT.

CLEARLY as the Divine authority of the office of deacon may be made out, a most important inquiry remains,—what are the qualifications for the discharge of the duties of the office? Without these the office degenerates into a mere name. Happily we can be at no loss to know. Scripture is very full on the subject, and we cannot do better, in the following observations, than make a few remarks on its requirements. The simple circumstance, that so many of the qualifications which the inspired volume demands in the deacon, it also demands for the bishop or pastor, is a plain proof of the high use and estimation of the office. Surely it cannot be proper for us, or for any Christian Church, to neglect what the Word of God so strongly recommends: so much inspired writing was not intended to be in vain! Supernatural gifts, in primitive times, doubtless made up for some qualities which now must be obtained by ordinary means,—such as a fair education fitting for the usual business of life. It is taken for granted that deacons possess this measure of knowledge and its instruments. Without them they would be obviously unfit for the management of the business of the poor, and of the

Church. These, to allude to nothing higher, demand arithmetic. It may be added, that it is not enough to possess *some* of the qualities in considerable force; it is necessary that the individual enjoy a fair share of them *all*. Apart from this, he cannot be a good deacon, whether in town or in country parishes.

Let us now advert to the qualifications which Scripture has detailed. At the original institution three were mentioned. The seven deacons were required to be men, 1st, of honest report; 2^d, full of the Holy Ghost; 3^d, of wisdom. In a case on which the peace of the Church, and the welfare of its private members were obviously suspended, superior character was essential. It was necessary, first of all, that the deacons be men of tried integrity, of an honesty which was above all suspicion. Money and other delicate interests were to be committed to them—interests as to which their fellow-men were peculiarly jealous; hence, it was necessary not only that they be honest, but of honest report, that they should bear a good reputation among the members of the Church, and in society generally. Though a man be of the strictest integrity in heart and conduct, yet if he do not sustain a blameless reputation with others, he is not fit for the deaconship. Next, they were to be men of the Holy Ghost, men of decided piety, under the teaching and sanctifying grace of the Spirit. This is essential to animate with that activity, love, fidelity, zeal, and perseverance which the duties of the office demand. It is only true piety which, during a long succession of years, will sustain the heart in tenderness to the poor amid trials and difficulties, and which will uphold the deacon in the unwearied, and

sometimes unrequited care of the house of God. And, lastly, he is to be a man of wisdom, a man of discernment and prudence, not carried away by the impulse of his feelings; but one able intelligently to judge between real and unreal cases of indigence, the proportion and manner in which charity should be dispensed, the best advice which the circumstances, not only of the poor, but of the Church generally, in perplexing seasons may require. Such were the comprehensive qualifications for which the apostles called, and they did not call in vain. Seven men were immediately found who bore them all. In Stephen and Philip, the only persons of whom we have any farther notice, the developement of spiritual character and usefulness is deeply interesting. Their names are sufficient to honour the new order of deacons.

But from the earliest let us turn to a later statement of qualifications, detailed by Paul in the 3d chapter of 1st Timothy. They are more minutely given, but there is no inconsistency with the former.

1. The deacons were to be grave, not austere or morose, but of dignified gravity. Few things are more injurious to Christian influence, or more unsuitable for one whose business it is to deal in cases of distress and Christian distress, than levity, or even excessive pleasantry and lightheartedness. All instinctively feel that this is unbecoming. It never recommends the Gospel or the Christian Church to the favour of any.

2. They must not be double-tongued,—in other words, they must be sincere. A deacon, to be relieved from the annoyances sometimes connected with the discharge of his duties, is tempted to put the poor off with in-

sincere words—to say one thing to one man, and an opposite to another. He is in danger also, perhaps, of promising to the pastor, and not fulfilling. This is justly fatal to character and to usefulness. It prevents confidence and creates contempt. The deacon, then, must be sincere.

3. It is not less essential that he be temperate. Fresh from the corruptions of Heathenism, not a few of the primitive Christians were exposed to temptations, which we would scarcely expect to find associated with the name of office-bearers in the Church. The deacon must not be given to too much wine. His office may sometimes carry him into social meetings, but he must shun every tendency to excess. Intemperance not only destroys credit, and unfits for the discharge of official duty; it mars religious character; it unfits for devotion, and lays the man open to a multitude of other sins. Who can conceive any thing more incongruous than a drunkard to be a distributor of alms to the pious poor, and a leading manager in the external affairs of the house of God, paying the minister, &c.?

4. He must be free from avarice,—not greedy of filthy lucre. Considerable sums pass through the deacon's hands for the use of the poor and of the Church. He will, if he seeks them, find opportunities for misappropriation and embezzlement; hence the importance of being superior to the temptations of avarice, both for his own sake, and to encourage the Church members to give liberally. I need say nothing of the incongruity of a hard-hearted, narrow-fisted deacon, starving the poor, keeping the minister in pecuniary anxieties, and all the while secretly enriching himself. What charac-

er can be more detestable? what spirit more fatal to every thing which deserves the name of religion?

5. He must be well acquainted with the doctrines of the Gospel. This is the meaning of "holding the mystery of the faith." His previous qualifications imply a knowledge of divine truth; but his knowledge must be superior. He must be familiarly acquainted with the gospel of salvation, so that he may be able to speak of it, and to commend it to others, especially when dealing out among them the donations of charity. A pious intelligent deacon may, in giving, make his alms preach. He may, from the bread which perisheth, mount up to the true bread which came down from heaven, and bestow upon the indigent, better gifts than money. But,

6. The knowledge of the Gospel is not enough. The Christian Church is apt to err in regard to the *spiritual* character of deacons. Drawing a just distinction between their office and that of the ruling elder, she may sometimes be tempted to speak as if good moral character, apart from piety, would suffice for the deaconship; but this is a serious mistake. While the office of elder demands *superior* Christian excellence, every office in the Church requires, and should possess decided piety. Not only is this indispensable for the deaconship itself, but because the office may be a step to a higher. Hence the apostolic counsel and qualification. The well qualified deacon must *hold* the mystery of the faith "in a pure conscience." He must be strongly and conscientiously attached to it. He must be prepared to make sacrifices for it. He must not abandon it for the world,—in short, he must be con-

scientious and resolute. What a comfort to a faithful pastor, to feel himself surrounded by such deacons. While the poor do not suffer, what a strengthening does an office-bearer of this character impart to the Church, and to those associated in the same labours with him. How must the deep and unalterable impression of gospel truth, too, upon the heart sustain under difficulties and perplexities, and encourage him to persevere in his work.

7. The deacon must be proved previously to entering on his labours. The office is highly important and responsible. Every one is not qualified for its duties, and yet his unfitness may not be immediately obvious. Hence the advantage of an antecedent trial. The very fact of resorting to it proclaims the seriousness of the duties, while it provides that the Church shall always enjoy the services of the most able officers. It seems to be intended that the deacon shall be a young man as compared with the elder. Hence, by Mosheim and others, *novitius*, young men is interpreted of deacons. This renders any invidiousness connected with a preliminary probation less felt.

8. The deacon must be the husband of one wife. Not that he must always be married (though a man who knows from experience what family ties are, will better sympathize in the family distresses of the poor), but that when he is married he must have but one wife. It may seem singular to us, that such an exhortation should be necessary in connection with any office-bearer of the Church, but we must remember that the great body of the early Christians consisted of those who had recently been Heathens. In these circumstances, there

was no small danger even of renewed men retaining, or thinking lightly of Pagan customs most discreditable to Christianity. Hence the qualification before us. It is scarcely necessary to add, that the great original law of marriage, binding in all ages, is one wife to one husband,—that there is no approval of polygamy in the Word of God,—that most of those who practised it in Old Testament times suffered for it—that there is only one case recorded for the first 2000 years of the world's history, and *that* apparently associated with crime and the Divine displeasure. Even were the practice lawful, it is plain, that in a deacon it would be most unwarrantable, and occupy time and attention which should be devoted to the interests of the poor and of the Church. Besides, apart from other things, it would draw many serious evils along with it.

9. The last qualification of character which is demanded of the deacon, is ruling well his own family—“Ruling their children and their own houses well.” This may seem a small matter in a public servant of the Church, but both as indicative of character and conducing to usefulness, it is most important. The deacon is, to a certain extent, a ruler; and it is the principle of God's providence to prepare men for a higher government by previous success in a lower. Those who acquit themselves well in the humbler, will be found the best qualified for the higher relations of life. Hence the importance of deacons ruling their own houses well. It will train them for public usefulness. And more than this. There are few things which, in the estimation of the world, discredit the head of a house more than having no authority at home, and bringing up a disorderly

and disliked family of children. The men of the world often boast, in this respect, of *their* good management, and have no patience for slovenliness and unruliness on the part of professed Christians, and especially Church office-bearers. Few things recommend religion and its friends more than excellence in the relative duties of life. No wonder, then, that Paul sums up the qualifications of the deacon in ruling his own family well.

Such are the scriptural qualifications for the office of deacon; and, combined together, what an interesting and estimable character do they form! how important and useful to the Church and to society! Though numerous, they are not rare or inaccessible in the Christian Church. Sound piety, intelligence, a talent for business, tenderness for the poor, and good management at home, embrace the leading points. Let these in any fair measure be present, and no one who is called to the office should hesitate to accept. Let none despise the office. The apostle Paul evidently regards it as of high value; and important as it is, he teaches the deacon to aspire after a sphere of more extensive usefulness. He calls upon deacons, by their diligence, intelligence, zeal, perseverance, and other good qualities, to approve themselves meet for the higher and more spiritual offices of the Church—those of the ruling elder and the pastor. He would have them thus to “purchase for themselves a good degree.” Surely it is to the honour of the office of deacon that it is not only good in itself, but is a step and a preparation for higher good.

Connected with the qualifications, we may shortly notice the MODE OF APPOINTMENT TO THE OFFICE. These

go together. One of the reasons why the qualifications are so fully unfolded in Scripture, is, not only that the deacon may be instructed in *his* duties, but that the Christian Church may be taught what sort of men *she* should call to the office. Happily nothing can be more clear than the testimony of Scripture as to the mode of appointment. There may be diversity of opinion as to other offices, but there can be none in regard to the deacon; and many will judge that it sets forth *the principle* on which all appointments to permanent Church offices should be made so conspicuously, that no difference of opinion ought to remain respecting any of them.

When it was necessary to institute the deaconship, how did the great Head of the Church proceed? The inspired apostles were present, and could, in virtue of their spiritual gifts, among which, the discernment of spirits was one, have easily pointed out the men of best qualification. Was this the mode pursued? No. The apostles called upon the Church members, the communicants, to elect; and *that* though they had been so recently formed into a church, that they could scarcely be supposed to know much of each other. Then it is worthy of remembrance, that they were called upon to judge, not as to common-place qualifications—the mere honesty and general decency of the parties, but of *spiritual qualifications*—whether they were men of the Holy Ghost, and of divine wisdom, and of honest report. Here, then, the members of the Christian Church, in the presence of the apostles, though but partially acquainted with each other, were required to judge of spiritual qualifications. What can better teach us the mode in which the Spirit of God would have men elected to the

deaconship? Does not this recognise, and that in un-
favourable circumstances, the ability of the Christian
people to judge of spiritual character?—and if so, why
should this principle be excluded in any case? The
apostles not only did not themselves nominate, they did
not call upon the elders or the more known and influen-
tial Christians to elect—they threw the choice entirely
upon the members of the Christian Church, however
humble and poor; and in doing so were they disap-
pointed in the result? Did the people fall into faction
divisions, confusion? Did they choose unsuitable men—
men so obviously unfit for the duties, that the apostles
found it necessary to interpose their authority and pre-
vent the appointment being completed? No. Their
choice was marked by the greatest wisdom. We have
no reason to believe that the apostles could have im-
proved it. Philip, who conducted himself with such
propriety that he afterwards rose to the high distinction
of being an Evangelist—an extraordinary office-bearer
in the Church—the companion and assistant of apostles,
was one of the number; and Stephen, the first, and we
may say *the* most illustrious of martyrs—at once meek
and heroic and divinely acknowledged, was another.
See, then, how admirably the Christian people chose;
and if the same parties are judged not qualified to elect
deacons now, is it not plain that either Christians are
not now what the primitive Christians were, or that
they are maligned? Whichever be the case, there is no
authority for the Church withholding from them a pri-
vilege which the Spirit of God bestowed, and which
experience and history prove them amply able to exer-
cise aright.

It is to misapprehend the case to say that men may be safely intrusted with elections which concern *property*, but that they are not trustworthy in calling to a spiritual office. Here it is taken for granted that men's love of money will prevent them from making an improper choice—such a choice as would run any hazard of endangering it. But it is forgotten that the property in the case before us was not the property of individuals but of the Church—a large body ; and experience can attest whether appointments to this sort of trust be always scrupulous and exact. Besides, the qualifications in regard to which the apostles required the Christian people to judge were not mere financial business, property qualifications, but moral and spiritual qualities.

Though there can be little doubt that the appointment to the office of deacon, so long as its scriptural character was retained, was like those of the pastor or bishop in primitive times, the popular call of the Church, yet this order does not seem to have been observed in *all* the churches of the Reformation. From the "Discipline" of the French and Dutch Churches, about the middle of the 17th century, it would appear that at the first institution of deacons, the Christian people were to nominate, but that afterwards the order might be kept up by the appointment of the consistory, subject to the approval of the congregation. In other Churches the practice was different. The First Book of Discipline of the Church of Scotland (1560) contemplated the free election of the Christian people, and the Belgic (1566) followed the same order. "We believe," says the Belgic Confession, "that the ministers, elders, and deacons ought to be called to those their functions, and, by the lawful election of the Church,

to be advanced into those offices—earnest prayer being made unto God, and after the order and manner which is set down to us in the Word of God. This especially every one ought to take diligent heed of, that he do not by unlawful means thrust himself into those offices; for every one must wait until he be called of God himself, that he may have a certain testimony of his vocation and may know that it is from the Lord.”—*Harmony of Confessions*, sect. 11.

However the popular call was exercised, whether more or less fully, [the separation and ordination to the office were solely in the hands of the regular Church courts. So it was in apostolic times. The people chose the deacons, and set them before the apostles, but they went no farther. They did not ordain the seven. This was left to the apostles and their successors in the ministry as *their* appropriate work. The following remarks on this point, by the late Rev. Dr Dick, professor of theology to the United Secession Church, are just and seasonable :—

“ The right of the people extended no farther than the *election* of the deacons. They had no power to exercise in their appointment to office. Their separation to it, their investiture with authority to perform its duties, was the province of the apostles. ‘ Look ye out seven men whom we may appoint over the business.’ It is the ordinance of Christ that to those who sustain any office in the Church, authority shall be transmitted from himself, its original source, by the medium of its ministers and rulers. The exclusion of the private members from any share in the transmission, is clearly marked in the passage before us. The limits are distinctly drawn—the *people elected*, and the *apostles appointed*. We never read in

he Scriptures that there is a power lodged in the Church to large to preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, and govern itself. This power was committed to apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, whom Jesus Christ has given to the Church, as an absolute sovereign delegates his authority to certain persons, bearing such titles and exercising such functions as he is pleased to confer upon them.—Eph. iv. 12; 1 Cor. xii. 28. When a voluntary society is to be formed, the members first meet and determine what shall be the form of government, and who shall be the governors; but in the case of the Church the governors were before the society. The Christian Church did not exist when the apostles received their commission, and those who at present bear rule in it are their successors in every thing pertaining to their office which was not extraordinary. It is manifest, therefore, that their power does not flow from the people, unless an express law can be produced, altering the original constitution, and ordaining, that though the apostles received “the keys of the kingdom” immediately from Christ, and the first office-bearers derived their power from the apostles, it should be afterwards communicated to the Church in its collective capacity.”—*Lectures on the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 138.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE DUTIES OF DEACON.

WE now come to the consideration of the duties of the deaconship. These have, in part, been already indirectly noticed. The nature and importance of the office imply some acquaintance with its duties, but they deserve a separate reference. The leading duty of the office is obviously the care of the poor. Here a question, however, arises: What poor? Is it the general poor of the community, whether religious or irreligious, or is the office intended only for the Christian poor? This is a very important inquiry. There can be no doubt that the poor members of the congregation are the *peculiar* objects of the deacon's care, and are, it may be, entitled to a higher provision; but the question is—Is the deacon to exclude all other poor from his special regard? Some have contended that this is the proper mode of management—that there is no authority in the New Testament for the deacon watching over any poor but the Christian poor; and cases are appealed to where the limitation of his attention, or that of the elder (who usually takes the charge of the poor in Scotland), to this class, has been attended with the best results, relieving the elder from many distracting duties, and leaving him free for the discharge of his more appropriate spiritual calling. There may be plausibility in this view, but it

apprehended nothing more. The circumstances of the Christian Church, in apostolic and in present times, are evidently very different. In the former case, she stood, except in Judea, in the heart of heathenism, and every where unrecognised by the State. It could not be expected that her humble members were to take charge of all the pagan poor who surrounded them in multitudes. This, in the nature of things, was impossible, and hence there is no scriptural example of it. There *could* be no such example, and it is unreasonable to demand it. At the same time, the Church required her members to do good to *all*, especially to such as were of the household of faith. The circumstances of the Christian Church at the present day are widely different. Besides her own poor, she is surrounded with many poor who do not belong, by living membership, to her communion, but who make a profession of Christianity; most of whom have received Christian baptism; many of whom have but temporally fallen away from Christian ordinances, owing to the pressure of circumstances, and may, ere long, be restored. There is no authority in Scripture for restricting the donations of the deacon to poor *communicants*; and unless this be made a test (on other grounds undesirable), there is no very well-defined principle by which poor, professing Christianity, can in one party be received, and another party be denied the good offices of the deacon. Besides, the nation not only recognises Christianity, but has territorially divided the country, and given the charge of its moral and religious interests (into which the management of the poor seriously enters) to the Church of Scotland. It is obvious, then, that there is a very marked distinction

between the circumstances of the Christian Church in primitive and in present times—so marked, that it would be unfair and inconclusive to draw serious inferences from the one to the other, especially if the inferences be on the side of restricting the duty of the office-bearers of the Church.

It may be true, that such a mode of management as that referred to may, to take the illustration from a large town, where above 700 poor were parcelled out among 20 or 40 elders, have been a greater improvement. This may, in the nature of things, have been demanded. No elders could be expected to bear such a burden for a succession of years; but the question is—Was the change a wise one? Was it in the right direction? It may have relieved the elders, and not only reduced the charge of 700 to a charge of 150, but made the work among them much more pleasant. To deal with 150 poor communicants must be a much more agreeable employment to a Christian mind, than dealing with indiscriminate poor, many of whom have no tie to the Christian Church. The change may have improved the eldership both in numbers and quality; but the question recurs—Was it good for the poor? Would it be advantageous to roll over the care of the far larger body of the poor on overseers who have no religious qualifications of character—who may be Christians, or who may be Infidels. It appears, from the Reports of the Poor Law Commissioners in England, that very many of the overseers were eminently illiterate, ignorant, and inefficient before the recent change. Would it be desirable to commit to the tender mercies of such persons, the care of multitudes of poor, many of them religiously edu-

in this way in the age in which we live. In most towns there are a variety of institutions for the relief of disease, such as dispensaries, infirmaries, &c. To meet particular wants at certain seasons of the year, there are societies for clothing and fuel. There are also friendly societies and provident institutions for accumulating the savings, not, perhaps, of the poor, but of classes which may become poor. There are schools, too, for the education of children—the Sabbath and week-day school for all—the evening class for those whose education has been neglected. By making himself master of all the means of humane, literary, economical, and religious good in his district or town, and becoming acquainted also with the respective managers, an intelligent deacon may do much to prevent poverty and suffering, and greatly mitigate them where they exist. He may likewise open up many channels of communication between different ranks in society,—and, by finding situations and employment for those who have no occupation, and acquainting the working classes with means of improving their condition, and strongly recommending the savings' bank when they are in circumstances to save, and discouraging to the uttermost whatever is fitted to waste the means and resources of the people—the spirit shop and the pawnbroking establishment, &c.,—he may not only win the confidence of the families of his district, but really enrich them to an extent which silver and gold cannot estimate. As an illustration of what may be done to prevent poverty, I beg to refer the reader to the working of an association at Manchester, to which there is reference in the Appendix. It is plain that what is here done by volunteers might be done most appropriately by deacons, and that, being office-bearers in the

Christian Church, they would fulfil the duty with greater effect.

It may be desirable to be a little more particular. I have said that one very important way in which deacons might promote the welfare of the humbler classes, would be by assisting them to husband their own resources, and directing them to the best means of doing so. This may be accomplished in various forms, particularly by the Friendly Society, the Savings' Bank, and the Loan Fund: each possesses its appropriate recommendation. Men in the middle and higher ranks of life enjoy the benefit of all these institutions, where they choose to avail themselves of them. Why should not the poor man have the same? The FRIENDLY SOCIETY corresponds to the insurance company. It presents many advantages to the poorer classes, and they have, to a large extent, availed themselves of them; but much more might be done in this way than has yet been attempted. As there have not unfrequently been disappointments, owing to such societies being founded on insufficient principles, the counsel of an intelligent deacon might be highly useful in directing to safe institutions, and guarding against the insecure. Though the security which a friendly society supplies is most important to all, especially to the family of a poor working man, some may not be able always to command the periodical payment which is required, or they may grudge to pay into its funds for many years, without having any certainty that they will need the benefits which it holds out. To this numerous class the SAVINGS' BANK presents superior attractions. There the parties are always certain of enjoying the advantage of their self-denial and providence, with an addition of in-

terest, and the payments may be made at any season, as best suits their convenience. It is pleasing to see the progress which such institutions have made, especially of late years ; but much may be done by the kind Christian deacon to extend their advantages yet more. He may throw out the suggestion and supply the necessary information, and afford facilities for enrolling the poor man and his family as contributors to the provident bank. There can be little question that the higher proportion of female servants above other classes, which avail themselves of the advantages of such institutions, is owing to the advice of intelligent and well-disposed masters and mistresses. Let the deacon occupy their place in regard to the great mass, who have no such considerate guardians. Nay more, let the deacons, in reference to the savings' bank, act upon the *aggressive principle*. Let him not content himself with mere advice ; let it be part of his office regularly, from week to week, or month to month, to collect the savings of the working classes of his charge, especially where belonging to the same Christian congregation, and pay them into the bank. Let him, so to speak, become their agent and collector, and no one can tell the amount of good which, at a small but regular sacrifice of time and trouble, may be wrought out. This plan has been pursued at Manchester with the best advantage.— *Vide Appendix*. But even this does not exhaust the devices of a wise and benevolent deacon. Why should not the deaconship of every congregation have a **LOAN FUND**, from which, on suitable recommendation and security, they might lend to the poorer classes ? In cases of protracted sickness, or when there is any important object for which a little extra money is needed,

such an institution would be of the highest advantage, often not only saving the poor man and his family from beggary, but putting them in a way of making themselves independent. The middle and higher classes have the advantage of credit, founded upon character. If they need money on any emergency, they go to a banker and receive it. But the poor man, who often needs it more than others, cannot do so. He has no resource but the pawnbroker, who, in effect, becomes his banker, and a most expensive and miserable banker he is. When the poor man's savings at the bank are exhausted, too often his course is, and necessity compels him, to part with one article after another, till his house and family are literally robbed—till his own Sabbath clothes, perhaps, are forfeited, and ere he can replace them the Sabbath taste and habits are also gone, and nothing remains but beggary and woe,—without God, and without hope, in which alas! his wife and children unhappily share. What is the remedy for this too frequent state of things? It is for the deaconship to have a Loan Fund, on the principle of the Mont de Pietè in Ireland. According to this system, I understand that a working man wishing a loan must bring security for the amount, from two decent people in his own class, with a recommender besides who also becomes a security that the borrower shall repay the loan by regular instalments. The only danger here seems to be, that the money will not be repaid, and that henceforward none will be willing to become sureties. Experience proves the very reverse to be the truth. So far from the parties borrowing failing in their engagement, the Loan Fund, at Powerscourt, the other year, had £250 of surplus profit, which the managers ex-

ended in clothing, &c., for the poor. Whether there could be such a thing as profit at all, in connection with loan funds, may admit of question; but, at least, the result proves that there is no danger the lenders will not receive again the money which they have lent. Besides the accommodation which such institutions afford to the industrious classes—the preservation from the ruinous sacrifices of the pawnbroker which they secure—the ability to purchase articles at the greatest advantage, and to avail themselves of favourable openings—the independence and family comfort to which they lead;—in addition to all these, what is scarcely less important, the poor man is taught the value of character, and the different ranks of society are, through means of this tie, interlaced one with another. At present, he has little pecuniary advantage from character, and this becomes an argument against caring much about it. It would be otherwise under the proposed loan system. Then he would feel that his station, and convenience, and advancement, all depended upon character,—that it was only where he was a reputable man, associating with reputable parties, that he could hope to share in those advantages by which he saw friends and acquaintances around him get on in the world. Where deacons were the administrators of such funds, not only would the worth of character, and Christian character, come to be more understood, but the attention of the higher and more opulent members of a congregation would come to be fixed upon industrious and deserving families, and sons and daughters from the midst of them would be promoted to creditable places.

The loan system would form a good introduction among families.

I need say nothing of the *spirit* in which deacons should discharge their duties to the poor—that is sufficiently obvious from the very nature of the case, and especially from the qualification of character which Scripture demands. Animated by the spirit of his office, and acting out the character which the counsels of the Word imply, he will not be haughty, or harsh, or suspicious; he will not be cold, and formal, and repulsive, discharging his work as if it were a burden; he will be frank and easy in his intercourse with the poor; take an interest in their avocations, their health, and welfare; kind, and tender, and sympathizing, especially when in sickness; but withal firm, and not easily persuaded to what his judgment does not approve. He will also have a deep conviction of the insufficiency of all his efforts to benefit the poor of his charge without the blessing of God, and hence he will not fail to seek that blessing in the exercise of diligent and persevering prayer for the Holy Spirit.

With regard to the duties which more directly concern the finance of the Church, the faithful deacon will administer the sums drawn, whether by collections or otherwise, with integrity and wisdom, in the spirit at once of justice and benevolence. He will remember the claims of the pastor, and encourage him, so far as circumstances will allow, by the liberality of his arrangements. And he will see that all other funds, such as school funds, Sabbath and week days', are properly attended to, regularly collected, and made available for the

ends for which they are raised, and that nothing be allowed to fall behind. In short, he will labour to introduce into the financial management of the house of God all the skill, promptitude, and accuracy which mark a well conducted worldly business. This is the leading duty of the deacon in this connection, and, if well done, it will redound to his honour, and add in no small degree to the comfort and success with which the affairs of congregations and churches are managed. There can be little question that the absence of an intelligent body of deacons has often led to confusion and disorder in carrying forward the different moral and religious schemes of parishes. Funds have not been raised at the proper time ; there is consequent embarrassment and crippling, if not hindrance of the whole plans of public usefulness. Few things are more discouraging than an exhausted or irregularly supplied exchequer. It will be the great care of the enlightened deacon to provide against this, and to keep the wheels well oiled.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OFFICE OF DEACON AS IT APPEARS IN THE STANDARDS AND HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

HEATHENISM neglects and despises the poor when aged and infirm—sometimes violently despatches them. Popery creates poor, cherishes the abject spirit of mendicancy, and turns almsgiving into a passport to heaven. Protestant Christianity alone treats the poor aright—providing for them either from the resources of the nation, or the donations of the Christian Church; the latter given from right motives, and administered by a class of office-bearers appointed for the express purpose of watching over their interests. It would have been a great reproach to Christianity, and a stumblingblock in the way of the world, had the Evangelical Church not cared for the poor, and specially provided for them. If we survey the state of the poor over Christendom, it will be found, speaking generally, that the Popish countries are overspread with the worst forms of mendicancy, though abounding with natural resources of wealth, and that the poor are worst cared for; while Protestant countries, in one form or another, by civil or ecclesiastical arrangement, make an incomparably better provision for the infirm and the indigent, and that though

naturally poorer in point of natural resources. It is much to the honour of Scotland, that at the period of the Reformation; one of the most rugged and uncultivated of countries—proverbially poor—she, in the Protestant and Presbyterian system which she set up, deeply and unweariedly interested herself in the right and scriptural management of the poor. Though the country was overrun with the mendicancy of Popery, and a change was at hand from the feudal to the modern system of society, which could not fail seriously to affect the labouring classes; yet she prepared as vigorously to provide for the poor, as if the care of them had devolved upon her in the most favourable circumstances. Her grand aim was to learn what was the mind of God on the subject, and to follow his counsel. Doing so, she was at once secured against many errors, and had the pleasing conviction that sooner or later she would be successful.

About 1556, a number of private Christians, who had been brought to the knowledge of the truth, under the labours of the Reformers, met together for religious conference, the reading of the Scriptures, and prayer. This might be said to be the beginning of the Evangelical Church in Scotland. As at this time they had no ministers, the sacraments were not dispensed. “Convinced,” says Dr M’Crie (*Life of Knox*, 2d edit. vol. i. p. 229), “of the necessity of order and discipline in their societies, and desirous to have them organized, so far as within their power, agreeably to the institution of Christ, they proceeded to choose elders for the inspection of their manners, to whom they promised subjection, and deacons for the collection and distribution

of alms to the poor." Edinburgh was the first place in which this order was established, — Dundee the first town in which a reformed Church was completely organized, provided with a regular minister, and favoured with the dispensation of the sacraments. The historian states that this took place in the end of 1556 or the beginning of 1557, and gives the names of the first five ruling elders in the Church of Edinburgh. The order of deacons was not a new thing in the history of the Christian Church; we have already seen that it was recognised and in operation in the Protestant Churches of the Continent; but more than this, it was introduced into Episcopal England at the same period in which it appeared in Scotland. Edward VI., who died in 1558, had given great encouragement to John A'Lasco, originally a Polish nobleman, who had become a Protestant, to come over to this country, and to take the charge of the foreign congregations then in London. His object appears to have been to present these congregations as a model in their constitution for the Church of England, which, owing to various adverse influences, had not been permitted to assume so reformed a shape as the king and her best friends earnestly longed for. A few congregations in the metropolis, formed on the rule of Scripture, and after the example of the Reformed Churches abroad, it was naturally thought would have no inconsiderable influence in gradually encouraging the faithful men of England to adopt the same constitution. Now, the constitution of the foreign Churches in London, composed of Germans, French, and Italians, embraced pastors, ruling elders, and deacons. This appears from the account of it which A'Lasco himself published.

Dr M'Crie^s says, speaking of these congregations, "The affairs of each congregation were managed by a minister, ruling elders, and deacons, and each of these were viewed as divinely ordained (*Appendix*, vol. i. p. 392), and yet Cranmer and the king warmly patronized A'Lasco; and the latter, in the charter which he granted to the congregation of foreigners, speaks of it as truly Christian and apostolical in doctrines and rites," and as "administered according to the Word of God and apostolic observances." Well, we may safely say, would it have been for England had the same system been universally approved and acted on,—much of the wide-spread religious ignorance which prevails would have been spared, and the management of the poor would not for ages have been allowed to remain in such disorder, as to prove the parent of extensive social evils.

In 1560, the Church of Scotland was fully organized as a Christian Church, and, as might have been expected, soon found it necessary to draw up some formal public system for the guidance of the many congregations which were now rising up all over the land. Hitherto the Common Order used in the English Church at Geneva had been followed, but this proving inadequate with the extension of the Church, a few of the leading ministers, at the invitation of the Privy Council, drew out a Book of Policy or Discipline. So matured were their views, and so directly drawn from Scripture in principle, that the work was completed in a few weeks, and was approved by the Church and the great body of the Privy Council. It begins in these interesting terms:—"To the Great Council of Scotland, now admitted to the regiment (government), by the providence of God,

and by the common consent of the Estates thereof, your honours' humble servitors and ministers of Jesus Christ within the same, wish grace, mercy, and peace from God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the perpetual increase of the Holy Spirit." In the 10th chapter, speaking of the office and election of elders and deacons, this wonderful document, still a standard of the Church of Scotland, has these sentences regarding the deaconship:—

"The office of deacon is to receive the rents and gather the alms of the kirk, to keep and distribute the same, as by the minister and kirk shall be appointed. They may also assist in judgment with the minister and elders, and may be admitted to read in assembly, if they be required, and be able thereto." This last provision is in harmony with those of foreign Churches, that, in the absence of other office-bearers, and in cases of necessity, the deacon may publicly read the Word of God, so that the people may not be deprived of the privilege of divine worship.

The qualifications of Christian character, on the part of the deacon, are next stated, and the course which is to be pursued in the event of censure being needed. The general qualifications for the office and mode of election, applicable to elders as well as deacons, are stated in these words:—"Men of best knowledge in God's Word and cleanest life—men faithful and of most honest conversation, that can be found in the kirk, must be nominated to be in election, and their names must be publicly read to the whole kirk, by the minister giving them advertisement, that from amongst them must be chosen elders and DEACONS. If any of these nominated

e noted with public infamy, he ought to be repelled ; or it is not seemly that the servant of corruption should have authority to judge in the Kirk of God. If any man know others of better qualities within the kirk than those that be nominated, let them be put in election with them, that the kirk may have the choice." It was contemplated that the office, or rather its active duties, should last only for a year ; at the same time, the deacon might be re-elected. No pecuniary provision was made for him, as the labour was meant to continue but for a year, and was not so absorbing as to unfit for attending upon his usual calling.

The high importance which the founders of the Church of Scotland attached to the office of the deacon, may be gathered from the circumstance, that if the minister was of light conversation, it was deemed right that the elders and deacons should admonish him. This seems to have been in a friendly way ; for in serious cases they were to complain to the adjacent ministers—in other words, the Presbytery, which had not, at the date of the First Book of Discipline, been formally organized.

The views entertained by the Church regarding the office of deacon, did not consist of mere speculations ; she forthwith proceeded to put them into active operation. In St Giles', Edinburgh, the church of John Knox, which contained 3000 hearers, there were 12 elders, and not less than 16 deacons.—*Dunlop's Confessions*, vol. ii. p. 638. It cannot be questioned that the congregations throughout the country were similarly appointed.

The next important date, in tracing the history of the office of deacon in the Church, is 1578—the date when the SECOND BOOK OF DISCIPLINE was agreed on by the

General Assembly. This was 18 years subsequent to the First, but there was no change of sentiment in regard to the office. There had been anxious discussion of questions of Church government, but the deacon retained his place and all his former importance in the Church. In the period which elapsed between the two Books of Discipline, there were various efforts made by the Church to obtain from the tithes and "chaplainries" a better and more stable provision for the poor, than she could collect from private sources in the troublous times through which she passed; but generally speaking, the covetousness of the parties into whose hands the Church lands had fallen, was too strong for her good intentions. She thus, however, showed her spirit of tenderness for the poor, and acquitted herself of an important duty.

The eighth chapter of the Second Book of Discipline treats "of deacons and their office, the last ordinary function in the Kirk," and runs in these terms:—

"1. The word *Διακονος*, sometimes is largely taken, comprehending all those who bear office in the *ministry* and perpetual function in the Kirk.

"2. But now as we speak it is taken only for those to whom the collection and distribution of the alms of the faithful and ecclesiastical goods do appertain.

"3. The office of the deacon is taken as an ordinary and perpetual ecclesiastical function in the Kirk of Christ.

"4. Of what properties and duties he ought to be who is called to this function, we remit to the *manifest* Scriptures.

"5. The deacon ought to be called and elected as the rest of the spiritual officers, of the which election was spoken before.

“ 6. Their office and power is to receive and distribute the whole ecclesiastical goods to them to whom they are appointed.

“ 7. This they ought to do according to the judgment and appointment of the presbyteries or the elderships (of the which the deacons are not), that the patrimony of the Kirk and poor be not converted to private men's use, nor wrongfully distributed.”

Such are the views of the Second Book of Discipline, a leading standard of the Church at the present day; and surely they are sufficiently clear and explicit. We do not read much of the office or its operations for many years. So far as we can discover, no acts of Assembly bearing upon it were passed. The office is in its own nature quiet and unobtrusive. Of this only we are assured, that the Church continued, with undiminished zeal, to labour for the suitable sustentation of the poor.

In the interesting little treatise of the celebrated Alexander Henderson, on “ The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland,” published in 1641, we have a section “ Of the Deacons and their Office.” The most important parts are contained in these sentences:—
 “ Their main duty is to collect, receive, and distribute, not only the alms for the poor, but the whole ecclesiastical goods which are not assigned and appointed for the maintenance of particular persons. These duties they must perform at the discretion and by the appointment of the pastor and elders; for which cause, and not for government, they are to be present at the ordinary meetings of the eldership. The means for the maintenance of the poor are collected by the deacons, the first day of the week, or the Lord's day, and other days of the public

assembling of the people to the worship of God, at the entry of the church; and if this prove not a competency, then do the people either bring in their charity on such days as are appointed by the eldership, or are willing to be taxed according as they shall be judged to be able. *In some cities and parishes where this order has been carefully observed, none have been suffered to beg, and none have lacked.*"

A little later, about the middle of the 17th century "A Treatise of the Ruling Elders and Deacons" was published by a minister of the Church of Scotland. By some the tract is attributed to the celebrated George Gillespie, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, and a commissioner to the Westminster Assembly; but the prevailing, and apparently well founded persuasion is that it proceeded from the pen of James Guthrie, minister of Stirling—one of the noble martyrs of the Church of Scotland. It is often bound up with the writings of his kinsman, William Guthrie of Fenwick; and Stewart of Pardovan, in his "Collections," published at the end of the century, expressly ascribes it to him, and extracts a whole chapter on Deacons from the treatise almost *verbatim*. Whoever was the author, not only is it admirable in itself, but it bears to have been "revised and published by order of the General Meeting of the Ministers and Elders of the Church, 1699." Its authority, then, is high and unquestionable;* and what are its views of the office of deacon? They are precisely those of the standards of the Church. From what may be called two cautions introduced into the second chap-

* This little treatise I have lately republished in "The Eldership of the Church of Scotland," &c., 1841.

r on the deacon, one may gather that at the period in which Guthrie wrote the office was in *some* congregations—it is not said in many, far less all,—but in some blended with that of the ruling elder, and that some were tempted to think lightly of the office of deacon. In this scriptural simplicity he guards against both errors, in these excellent terms:—

“ From the divine institution of deacons we gather—
1st, That the deacon is a distinct officer from the elder.*
 [It is a defect and fault in some congregations that they put no difference betwixt these two, but so confound and mingle them together, as if they were both one, either appointing none for the office of deacon, but leaving that charge also upon the elders, or else giving the deacons the same power and employment with the elders. It is true whatsoever the deacon may do by virtue of his office, that same may be done by an elder, as whatsoever is done by an elder may be done by a minister; because the higher and more eminent officers in the Church include the powers of the lower. It is also true that the deacons may assist in judgment with the ministers and elders,† and be helping to them in those things that concern the oversight of the congregations by information and advice; yet it is necessary that congregations should so far regard the ordinances and reverence the wisdom of God in appointing these officers, as to have both elders and deacons, and to preserve them distinct in their actings and operations, not giving to the deacons or suffering them to assume the elder's office. *2d*, That deacons are not to count light of this employment, or any others to esteem lightly of them, because they are

* First Book of Discipline, chap. ii. p. 74.

† Ibid., chap. ii. p. 57.

called thereunto and do exercise the same ; but that they themselves and all others ought to look upon it as one of those holy and honourable employments which the wisdom of God hath thought fit to appoint in his house for supplying the necessities of the saints. The Lord Jesus himself did not disdain to wash his disciples' feet ; angels are all of them ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for their sakes who are appointed to be heirs of salvation. Why, then, should any think it below them to serve the Church of Christ, and to minister to the saints in this employment ? ”

The reader may wish to see the remainder of Guthrie's views, and those of his brethren, on the office. They are embraced under the following heads :—

“ *On the Calling of Deacons.*—None is to step into this office but he that is lawfully called thereto.* Unto their calling it is needful—1st, That they have abilities and gifts fit for the charge, together with an honest purpose of heart to serve the Lord faithfully in the discharge of the same, by seeking his honour and the good of the Church. 2d, That they be chosen by the congregation in which they are to serve, which choice is to be made after the same manner as that of a ruling elder. 3d, that trial be taken by the minister and elders concerning their conversation, that it be blameless and holy ; and concerning their gifts, that they have that tenderness, discretion, dexterity, and prudence that is fit for that employment, and that they be admitted to their charge with prayer, and supplication, and opening of the Word,

* Second Book of Discipline, chap. viii.

concerning their duty, publicly in the congregation, here they are solemnly to engage themselves to be faithful to the charge committed to them of God.*

“ *Of their Duty—First, of their Conversation.*—Their duty is either that which concerns their conversation, or their office and calling. For their conversation, the apostle shows what it must be.† 1st, They must not be double-tongued, nor liars, nor dissemblers, nor deceivers. 2d, They must not be given to much wine, nor tipplers, nor drunkards, nor lovers, nor followers of strong drink. 3d, They must not be greedy of filthy lucre, nor such as are covetous, and whose hearts run after the things of the world. 4th, They must be grave men, of a posed and staid carriage, and not of a light and vain behaviour. 5th, They must be such as hold fast the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, that is, who do not only know the doctrine of the Gospel, but do hold fast the faith thereof without wavering, and study to have a good conscience in walking answerably thereto. 6th, They must be the husband of one wife, such as abstain from all unlawful lusts, satisfying themselves with the remedy allowed of God. 7th, They must be such as rule their own houses and their children well; such as command and instruct their children and household to keep the way of the Lord, going before them in the practice of piety and godliness, and all holy and religious duties.

“ *Of the Duties of their Calling.*—The duties that deacons are bound to perform in their calling may be reduced to these heads:‡ 1st, That they be careful to take exact notice of such as are poor in the congrega-

* Acts vi. 3, 5, 6; 1 Tim. iii. 10.

† 1 Tim. iii. 8-12.

‡ Second Book of Discipline, chap. viii.

tion, and have not wherewith to maintain themselves. 2d, That they be careful, from time to time, to collect and receive from the several members of the congregation and strangers that come among them, what the Lord shall incline their hearts to give for a supply of the necessities of the poor; and, in a seasonable and Christian way, to stir up and exhort to charity and liberality, that the more may be given. 3d, That what is received and collected by them be faithfully delivered, that it may be put into the treasury of the congregation. 4th, That they do timeously make known the several conditions and necessities of the several poor within the congregation to the church session, that provision may be appointed accordingly for each of them, that so the poor may not be put to begging, to the grief of their spirits and the reproach of the Gospel. 5th, That they be careful, honestly and in simplicity, without respect of persons, to distribute and deliver to the poor what is appointed for supply of their necessities; and if they be orphans and young ones, or such who have no knowledge nor understanding, nor ability to dispose and order the things that concern their food and raiment, that the deacons honestly employ and bestow what is given for their use, that they may be supplied in these things. 6th, That they be careful that what belongs to the poor be not dilapidated nor applied to any other use; and if there be any stock in the Church treasure, it be improved to the best advantage for the benefit and use of the poor. Yet so that the poor be rather always supplied than money treasured up for a vain show. 7th, That they be careful to take notice of those that are sick, that they may acquaint the ministers and elders therewith for visiting

them, and if they be poor, that their necessities may be applied.

“That deacons may the more conveniently discharge their duty, it is fit that some part of the congregation be assigned to every one of them, for the better inspection of the poor thereof, and that the diets of collecting for the poor be divided amongst them.

“The number of deacons in every congregation is to be according to the proportion of the congregation and of the poor therein; and though there be no necessity of an equal number of elders and deacons, yet it is fit that each elder have some deacon to be assisting to him in the bounds of which he hath more peculiar inspection, that so both the one and the other may discharge their duty with the greater facility to themselves, and with the greater benefit and advantage to the congregation.”

In the 17th century, the office of deacon seems to have been in very general, if not universal operation. Those who held it appear to have been numerous. In Glasgow, in 1657, there were five quarters, to each of which there were 18 deacons and as many elders attached—making 90 deacons and as many elders. The fact of the deacons bearing so high a proportion to the elders, is a proof of the importance of the office. In 1659, there were 16 deacons and 23 elders in the parish of Dunfermline. In 1649, the Presbytery of Dunfermline ordered a new and enlarged election of elders and deacons to be made in all the parishes of the Presbytery, 14 in number, and which, with one or two exceptions, are all rural parishes. The proportions in which they recommend the elections to be made are:—12 deacons and 18 elders in the largest population; 8 deacons and 10 elders in

the less numerous, and 4 deacons and 6 elders in the smallest. At this period, in Torryburn, a small country parish, but pretty populous, there seems to have been 11 deacons; and if in this parish they were so numerous, in other parishes they must have formed a large body. Anderson, in his "Defence of Presbyterian Church Government," 60 years later (1714), in answering an objection that deacons were rare in the parishes of Scotland, states that "they were in every congregation where they could be had—to my certain knowledge in the lesser as well as larger towns—*yea, in many country congregations*. Every minister is posed upon it by the Presbytery twice a-year, whether his session be constituted with deacons as well as elders. Possibly some congregations may have little or no stock (money to distribute), and perhaps as few people that want it."—P. 212. He then goes on to show that the office is not essential to the existence of a Christian Church—that the Church existed before the institution of deacons. This is true. Still the office is a permanent as well as most important one in the Christian Church, and should be maintained in every congregation, even the smallest. In all there will be found some poor calling for the aid of the deacon; and though there were none such, yet, as we have seen, there are other duties connected with what may be called the finance of the Church—Christian missions, &c., to which the deacon may most appropriately attend.

In 1719, an act of Assembly was passed bearing distinctly on the office of deacon. It runs in these terms:—"The General Assembly recommends to all the ministers of this Church, to take care that deacons, as well

elders, be ordained in such congregations where deacons are wanting: But declares, That deacons, as such, all have no decisive voice in calling of ministers, or in the exercise of Church discipline."

From the above period down, comparatively speaking, modern days, the office of deacon, as a distinct office in the Church of Scotland, has, to a great extent, been in decay,* and that its leading duties in the care of the poor have been neglected; far from it. They have been excellently discharged—only blended with those of the elder. Forty thousand pounds, it appears from official documents, are yearly raised by the free-will contributions of the Church, and, with a larger sum, are dispensed by 1000 unpaid office-bearers of the Church of Scotland, elders and deacons. Perhaps no Christian Church can point to so honourable a donation. Still, among the number of office-bearers, the deacons form but a small part. They have, as a body, been allowed to fall into the shade. No better proof of this can be afforded than in the fact, that no tract or treatise, however small, so far as I know, has been published on the subject. I had, in a previous publication, occasion to regret that so little has been written or published on the office of ruling elder. I have still more reason to regret the neglect with which the office of deacon has been too often treated. With the exception of an admirable chapter of Dr

* There have still been deacons in particular congregations, such as in the Barony, Glasgow, also St John's, St Enoch's, St David's, &c., of the same city. There have also been similar office-bearers, I understand, in some country parishes, as in Mid-Calder and Whitburn, more recently in Killin and Comrie. I rejoice to learn that in some quarters traces of revival are already apparent—that deacons have lately been elected in St John's, Edinburgh, and that the subject is under the consideration of the Session of the High Church parish of the same city. It is also interesting to learn, that in the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, from which the office had in a great measure disappeared, not a few congregations are now calling men to the discharge of its duties.

Chalmers', in his "Christian and Economic Polity of a Nation," in which he points out, as he did many years ago, with a rare sagacity which always carries him far ahead of the age, the importance of devolving the temporal ministrations of a Church on a separate order of office-bearers—with this exception, in which he successfully argues for the separation of the offices of elder and deacon, I am not aware that any thing has been written on the deaconship in modern times, at least in this country.* The Acts of the General Assembly are entirely silent, and so are the writings of the friends of the Church. Surely this, though by no means conclusive as to the non-operation of the office, is an unfavourable sign of the interest and zeal of the Church in its behalf. Of late years, with the growing attention of the public mind to the constitution of the Christian Church, and the pressure of the question of Scottish pauperism, there has been increasing inquiry into the deaconship, and a growing desire to revive and extend the operations of the office. I trust that this spirit will enlarge yet more and more, satisfied as I am that, under God, the right management of the poor depends in a great degree upon the universal revival of the office, and the universal compliance with the mind of the great Head of the Church. There can be little question that it might be easily and at once revived in every parish of Scotland. There are the materials, let the Church authoritatively call them into operation. The advantages are great, obvious, immediate, permanent. The notice of a few of these will naturally belong to the next chapter.

* Dr Dwight of America has a good discourse on it in his "Theology;" and Dr Gill has a few pages in his "Body of Divinity," vol. iii.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GENERAL ADVANTAGES OF A REVIVAL OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON, AND THE SPECIAL CALL TO IT AT THE PRESENT DAY.

1. A GENERAL revival of the office of deacon would be highly useful to the eldership. I need say nothing of the importance of this spiritual office in the Church of Christ, or of the immense benefits which the discharge of its duties has rendered to the Church and to society. At the same time, as at present administered, it admits of decided enlargement and improvement. The revival of the office of deacon would conduce to both, and that in a variety of ways. It cannot be doubted that one reason, especially in large towns, why many excellent men, when asked to join the eldership, decline to do so, is the troublesome and oppressive charge of the poor, as they apprehend it, in which they would thereby involve themselves. They have no time for this, especially if they belong to the humbler classes of society, and have little taste or tact for it if in the higher; hence the services of many are lost to the eldership. I am informed, that in a town where there were but 50 elders to the charge of above 700 poor, there was no obtaining elders till relieved of the charge of the general, as distinguished from the poor in communion with the Church. The

number was reduced to 150. Since this arrangement has been made—not a correct one, as we have shown, in point of principle, so far as the poor are concerned, however proper in regard to the elder—there has been no difficulty in obtaining the aid of men excellently qualified for the discharge of spiritual duties. Had the elder no charge of the poor whatever, it may be believed that, for the same reason, the facilities for obtaining men of suitable qualifications, in all ranks, would be greatly multiplied.

But the revival of the office of deacon would not only add to the number of the eldership—itsself an immense advantage—but it would improve the character and influence of those who hold the office of elder. Their appropriate spiritual calling is apt to suffer, from being mixed up with the management of temporalities. These are ready to absorb, and the poor are apt to carry prejudices—it may be unreasonable ones, created by the one administration against the other, and higher. This is finely expounded by Dr Chalmers, in a part of his works to which reference has been already made. The more that a man holding a spiritual office can be separated from mere secular matters, the better. The apostles evidently acted upon this principle in instituting the office of deacon. At the same time, it is not so absolute as to preclude a union of offices where there are not men to fill both departments. It is plain that the apostles must themselves have managed the affairs of the poor previously to the appointment of deacons; and if so, it cannot, in cases of necessity, be unlawful for ruling elders to discharge the same duty. Where possible, however, this should be avoided, and in the vast majority of cases,

it may be easily and safely done. It may be noticed, that if the present discussion on the management of the poor in Scotland terminate in any thing like a nearer approximation to the English poor law system, it will be *doubly* necessary for the integrity of the office of elder to have a large body of deacons. Apart from this, there will be great danger of the office being seriously secularized, and that just at the very time it is rising in its spiritual character. A faithful deaconship would, by keeping up the habits of the people, often render a compulsory assessment unnecessary; while, where it existed, their services would be peculiarly needed to shield the elder's office from injury.

In addition to the advantage of making the elder more free for the exercise of his spiritual calling, and giving him to feel that he really is invested with an important spiritual office, which demands special attention, there is another advantage in this connection, and that is, that the deaconship would prove an excellent nursery for the elder-ship. Men having been tried in the one office, would, where otherwise qualified, enter with great effect upon the other. The apostle Paul evidently contemplated the deacon being a younger man than the elder, and, after being proved in the deaconship, rising to a higher office in the Church; nor where the election to the office of elder is popular, is there any thing difficult or invidious in the advancement. If the appointment rested with the minister and elders there might be difficulty. They might be satisfied in their own minds, that one who made an excellent deacon wanted the qualities to render him an equally excellent elder, and could not, therefore, propose him to the congregation; while they would feel it to be

painfully invidious to pass over one who had served the deaconship well for many years, and to put younger men over his head. This invidiousness is prevented where the congregation elect to the eldership. We may be sure that they will not unnecessarily pass over a deacon who has been known or useful among them, and, supposing that a deacon is not so called, he will be much more easily reconciled to retain his deaconship and discharge its duties, in which he excels, when it is the voice, not of an individual, but of the congregation which decides. The deaconship, as affording an opportunity of knowing men's character and qualifications and proving their graces in various ways, is exceedingly valuable as a preparation for the eldership. It will secure a far larger number of efficient elders, particularly in considerable towns, where imperfect acquaintance of the members of the congregation one with another is one of the grand hindrances to a well-appointed staff of elders. A friend, who had 16 deacons in his congregation, four of whom were lately called to the office of elder by the votes of the Christian people, remarks on the advantage to which I at present refer in these terms:—"The early bringing in of men too young for the eldership to the habit of active usefulness, and if they approve themselves in the inferior office, preparing and pointing them out to the session and congregation as fit persons for the higher,—this I find a *real* advantage, and do not doubt that it might be carried to a great extent and to the best results." So much for the influence of a revived deaconship on the eldership.

2. The change would be beneficial to the minister. It would at once relieve, and strengthen, and encourage

him. Even as matters stand, with all the aid which he derives from elders, there are many matters devolved upon him of a secular nature, which he would rather wish to commit to the hands of deacons, as appropriate to them; and, besides this, it is comforting and animating for a pastor to be surrounded by a large body of intelligent men, interested in the poor and the financial affairs of the Church. He feels, that amid all his own difficulties and discouragements, he is not standing alone—that others are alive to his circumstances, and sympathize with him, and are forward to aid him—and that he can have their advice and co-operation in many matters, which are otherwise fitted to distract and to burden. This is a source of comfort and strength, even though he may not, as pastor, have frequent occasion to call for their assistance.

3. Next, a revival of the office of deacon would interest a large body of men in the poor, and reflexly do good to the deacon himself. It is a common and melancholy saying, that one half of society do not know what the other half are doing, or how they subsist. This is not like the sympathy and benevolence of brothers—the children of the same Father. Nor is it good for the community. It creates a most injurious separation of ranks, which soon comes to be filled up with jealousies, alienations, and enmities, ready to break out on the first favourable opportunity. The office of deacon tends to amalgamate ranks, to soften differences, to prevent or correct pernicious misapprehensions. Besides this, to labour among the poor is to do good to one's self. It teaches dependence upon God's sovereignty, which maketh us to differ—calls forth gratitude to the kindness of Providence—

awakens sympathy and regard for our suffering fellow-men—and is fitted to make one humble and denied to the world. It affords scope, too, for active Christian benevolence—a benevolence which it is not desirable should remain without an object, ever addressed from the pulpit, but never called into living operation in the world. When it is considered that deacons may generally be young men, the advantage of early bringing them into contact with the indigent, and preventing the growth of selfishness and worldliness, and exaggerated views of life, in an age peculiarly addicted to such evils, is the more important.

4. A *fourth* advantage of the revival of the office of deacon, would be the increased attention which the poor would receive, not only in the supply of their actual wants but in other ways. Much of this cannot be expected at the hands of paid agents, generally appointed because they are stern to the poor, and will keep down pauperism, and appointed, too, independent of religious character. Such persons would naturally treat the poor either with great coldness and harshness, or would minister to their wants with a prodigality which would be very injurious. There is no sort of moral or religious security that they would act a different part. On the other hand, though private Christians may, and ought to do much more for the welfare of the poor, by personal exertions, than they usually attempt, yet these do not supersede the attentions of the deacon. Having no official or responsible public character, private individuals may care for the poor or not, by fits and starts, just as they please, and as suits their convenience. This is not satisfactory to the poor, nor is it fitted to gain the object in view. The grand thing is

join the advantages of both—the advantage of official responsibility and persevering application, with the intelligent sympathizing kindness of the private Christian; and in the character and office of the Christian deacon these unite. It is evidently a matter of high moment and serious obligation, to do more for the poor, particularly in the large towns, and remote Highland and Island parishes, than is usually done, to enlarge, if necessary, the existing pecuniary provision; but above all, to take steps for raising their character, and with it their condition. Humanly speaking, it would be impossible to create, at once, a large body of men over the whole country, possessed of the character and position of the Christian deacon, without doing an immense service, directly or indirectly, to the families of the poor. The raising up of several thousand men, all interested in their indigent fellow-men and fellow-parishioners, could not fail to be immediately felt. It would prevent intemperance, and promote education, and economical habits, and domestic comfort; and, in short, render services of good, which at present we can scarcely conceive.

It is right to add, that a peculiar class of poor, who have special claims upon the attention of the Christian deacon, would naturally and greatly share in the advantages of a revival of the office—I mean the *poor saints*. They should be cared for, not merely as ordinary poor, receiving a few shillings now and then: they should, so to speak, be watched over. The congregation, through the deacon, should see to it, that none of their members are in want of food or clothing, and so prevented from attending on the services of the sanctuary. Some hesitate about a revival of the office of deacon, in the apprehen-

sion that, with the eldership in active operation, there would be no work for the deacon. But let this important branch of Church duty be properly attended to, and there will be no want of pleasant and useful labour, even though the more general duties of the office were fewer than they are.

5. As a consequence of the whole, the Church would be strengthened in the affections of the people, and so fitted for growing usefulness. She would be surrounded by many thousand additional office-bearers, while the offices of minister and elder would, at the same time, be raised in efficiency,—in short, the Church should do more work and the work would be better done; and, in these days, such a course is the grand condition of public favour and stability. Besides, the Church would receive the blessing of the poor man, which is of no small price; and yet better, she would be crowned with the approbation of her exalted Head. Not only seeking to do good, but to do good in the way of His appointment, His special smile would rest upon her labours.

These are strong recommendations for reviving the office of deacon at any time, but they are particularly important at the present day. After making every allowance for the danger to which even sagacious men are exposed, of exaggerating the social evils which may happen to prevail at a particular season, there seems every reason to conclude, that the combination of evils which at present presses upon society is not transitory. The increasing application of machinery to manufactures, and the improved methods of agriculture, are evidently forcing multitudes, who have not the means of emigration, into the ranks of poverty. However society

ay ultimately right itself, this is the present result, and ere seems no probability that it will quickly disappear. In these circumstances, it is plain that some great effort must be made to meet the wants of society. The country seems to be driving to one of those grand crises which form epochs in history, and which can be encountered only by some simultaneous exertion of corresponding extent and power. To prevent, however, the reader being misled by exaggerated views, I have corrected, in the Appendix, some of the greatly over-coloured statements, in regard to the social condition of Glasgow and Scotland, which from time to time have been made. Still the evils are alarming, and all intelligent, and especially Christian men, must look them stedfastly in the face. Whether a revival of the full duties of the Christian Church in regard to the poor, and that in the way of Christ's appointment, by a large staff of deacons, however equal to meet the ordinary calls of indigence, would be adequate in such an emergency as the present, the fruit of the accumulating evils of years—may be doubtful. Still it is plainly a movement in the right direction; and it is unquestionable that, in this way at least, very much good would be accomplished. In a crisis so serious there is always danger that the hope of immediate relief may betray men into plans, not only defective, but ultimately injurious. There is peculiar hazard of this where personal and family suffering are involved. Benevolent men are willing even to sacrifice their speculative principles, or to hold them in abeyance, for the sake of supplying the wants of their destitute fellow-men. All this enhances the value of charity, in the scriptural way proposed, so much the more. Seeking

out the old paths of the Word of God, and standing in them, we can never do mischief. We may not be able to accomplish at once all the good which is desirable or necessary, but we are in the right way, and must be ultimately successful.

Many, then, and peculiar are the advantages of reviving the office of deacon. Our present social disorders may have been intended, in the providence of God, in part, to call the attention of the Christian Church to this part of its duty. It is true that most Christian Churches do something for their poor, but they do not in this respect, discharge their *whole* duty to all the poor, in the way or to the extent in which Christ requires it. Let the Christian Church listen to the voice of Providence, and be faithful to her trust and to the rule of Scripture. A high honour and distinguished reward await her if true to herself and to the poor. Discredit and reproach will attend her footsteps if, in such a crisis, the irreligious and the infidel can say, with truth, that the Christian Church did no more than the world, and that, in extraordinary circumstances, she felt and acted as if there were nothing peculiar.

I cannot suppose that any parties will be so unreasonable or infatuated as *wilfully* to throw obstacles in the way of the revival of the office of deacon. There may at first be a little jealousy in some quarters. In rural parishes some heritors may fear that, sympathizing too strongly with the poor, or bringing out their wants more fully than before, deacons may add to the parochial burdens in seeking to relieve them; and some elders may fear that their office will be superseded when that of the deacon comes into vigorous play; but the jealousies

be equally unfounded. The deacon will ultimately, and at no great distance of time, *prevent* pauperism; and instead of superseding, will *improve* the office of elder, and make it more efficient for its appropriate duties. These things are in accordance with experience. I happen to know a case where, on the revival of the office of deacon, a few years ago, there was a little unpleasant feeling at first among the parties referred to, from not correctly understanding the nature and operation of the deaconship; but soon a leading heritor made the deacon his private almoner, so satisfied was he with the change, and speedily the services of the deacon were appreciated by the elders, and were most valued by the most diligent and prayerful of the number. If any *doubt* exists as to the precise extent of the power of the deacon in the *legal* management of the poor, it might be desirable that it should be ascertained and established. It is not likely that in such a case any parties, however unreasonable, would long hold out. The congregation have an effectual check upon such jealousies as would seriously interfere with the proper parochial organization of the Christian Church, and it is right that it should be so.

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

APPENDIX.

No. I.

TESTIMONY OF AN ENGLISH PRELATE TO PRESBYTERIAN VIEWS OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON.

DR CROFT, Bishop of Hereford, published in 1675, under the title of "A Humble Moderator," a treatise on the "True State of the Primitive Church," in which, among many other concessions, the following just sentiments occur "Concerning deacons:"—

"Whether this of deaconship be properly called an order or an office I will not dispute—but certainly *no spiritual order*; for their office was to serve tables, as the Scripture phrases it, which, in plain English, is nothing else but overseers of the poor, to distribute justly and discreetly the alms of the faithful, which the apostles would not trouble themselves withal, lest it should hinder them in the ministration of the word and prayer. But as most matters of this world, in process of time, deflect much from the original constitution, so it fell out in this business; for the bishops, who pretend to be successors to the apostles, by little and little, took to themselves the dispensation of alms, first by way of inspection over the deacons, but at length the total management; and the deacons, who were mere lay-officers, by degrees crept into the Church ministration, and became a reputed spiritual order, and a necessary degree and step to the priesthood, of which I can find nothing in Scripture and the original institution, nor a word relating to any thing but the ordering of alms for the poor. And the first I find of these officiating in spiritual matters, is in Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century. He relates, that when the bishop had consecrated the bread and wine for the Lord's Supper, the deacons took it from him, and delivered it to

the lay-communicants there present, and carried it also to the faithful that were absent—hindered, I guess, from coming by sickness or some other good excusing cause. . . . But it is evident this was not yet come to be the general practice in all Churches, but only in Greece, where Justin Martyr lived; for Tertullian, who lived in Africa some years after Justin, declares, that the custom there was to receive the blessed sacrament from the hands of the bishop only, whom he calls the president, that is, whosoever was chief in the assembly whether bishop or presbyter. But yet, I confess, that this custom of the deacons delivering the blessed sacrament, or at least one part of it, viz., the chalice, by degrees became the custom in most Churches in after ages; and so, passing from one thing to another, in time they came to administer the sacrament of baptism, and at last to the ministration of the Word, the business which the apostles peculiarly reserved for themselves, and which the bishops also, for a long time, reserved entirely to themselves.

Thus, you see, in process of time, how strangely things alter from the original institution. The bishops omit preaching, and become servants of tables; and the deacons, from serving of tables, step up into the pulpit and become preachers. But Petavius takes upon him to prove deaconship a spiritual order, and brings us a more early author for it than Justin, that noble martyr Ignatius, who, in his epistle to the Trallians, calls deacons (as Petavius conceives) ministers of the mysteries of Christ. Here I find that which I often lament, learned men to go in a track, one after another; and some through inadvertency, some through partiality, take many passages of ancient authors quite different from their meaning, as here, all following the first erroneous interpreter of Ignatius. Sure this fancy of deacons ran much in his head, otherwise he could never have found them here; for it is evident the word *deaconus* in this place relates to the presbyter newly before mentioned, telling the people they ought to be obedient to the presbyters as to the apostles; (then follows) 'You must, therefore, please them in all things, being ministers of the mysteries of Christ.'

He (Petavius) tells us out of the Acts that Philip and Stephen, both deacons, were preachers of the Word—that is, a spiritual work, therefore belongs to a spiritual order. I would gladly know who informed Petavius that Philip, who preached to the eunuch, and afterwards went about preaching to others, was Philip the deacon, and not rather Philip the apostle, as seems to me far more probable; for Philip the deacon was,

by his office, to reside at Jerusalem, and take care of the poor. Thither the alms of the faithful were sent to relieve the saints at Jerusalem. But you farther urge, 'Surely Stephen was a deacon,' and let Philip also, if you please, it signifies little to the purpose. Sure I can shew out of Scripture preachers that were in no spiritual order—neither presbyters, nor deacons neither, as Aquila and Priscilla, his wife too, and Apollos likewise, to whom they both preached, and instructed him more fully. Sure they did not ordain Apollos a deacon; nor can I believe any of the apostles ordained him deacon, and sent him forth to preach before he was well catechised in the Word. He was not so much as baptized in Christ, but knew only the baptism of John. If not baptized, surely not ordained deacon; yet he prevailed, and mightily convinced the Jews. . . . It is evident, then, from Scripture, that the first institution of deacons was a mere lay office—I will not say a profane office (as some too grossly and irreverently have termed it), but a pious and honourable office in the Church of God, to serve tables, to take care of God's poor; but, as I have showed, in process of time, it became quite another thing, and so different from the original institution, that it made Chrysostom and divers others great and good men, doubt whether the apostles did not constitute two sorts of deacons—some for the lay office, some for spiritual offices. Had Chrysostom consulted only Scripture, he would never have doubted nor dreamed of two sorts of deacons, there being no mention at all but of one; but he seeing the practice of the Church, which he was unwilling to condemn, so different from that one apostolical institution of deacons, this so confounded the good man that he knew not well what to make of it, and willing to piece Scripture and the present practice together, to put a new patch upon an old garment, made the rent the wider, rending the deaconship in two pieces, which of old was but one, only to serve tables; which office, he that used well, purchased to himself a good degree, a good esteem; and so it might be a recommendation to the degree of priesthood, though no necessary step to it."—P. 52.

After perusing these extracts, the reader will not wonder at the strange applications which have been made of the office of deacon in the course of ecclesiastical history, and which are made still in the Church of Rome. Part of the office, after it had lost its original design, was to direct the people, in their Church devotions, where each part began, they being too ignorant to know themselves. Hence the

deacons were called "holy criers." By license from the bishop they had authority to preach, to restore penitents, and grant absolution, and to represent the bishops in general councils—functions which involve the leading duties of the ministerial office. In the Church of Rome it is the deacon's office to incense the officiating priest or prelate—to lay the corporal on the altar—to receive the patten or cup from the subdeacon, and to present it to the person officiating—to incense the choir—to receive the pix from the officiating prelate, and carry it to the subdeacon; and at the pontifical mass, when the bishop gives the blessing, to put the mitre on his head, and to take off the archbishop's pall and lay it on the altar!—*Vide Encyclopædia Britannica*, 7th edit., Deacon. According to the ordination of deacon in the Church of England, he is to assist in the dispensation of the communion, but he is limited to the administration of the wine!

No. II.

REVIVAL OF THE ORDER OF DEACONS STRONGLY AND IMMEDIATELY RECOMMENDED BY MINISTERS AND ELDERS OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH IN EDINBURGH, 1841.

It may not be unknown to the reader, that during the last winter the state of the poor, in connection with remedial measures, has been matter of full and anxious consideration by ministers and elders of the Established Church, both in Edinburgh and Glasgow. In the latter an Association was formed, which regularly met once a fortnight. Under its auspices a very interesting course of lectures was delivered, which has since been re-delivered in Edinburgh, and is now in the course of publication. Among many suggestions which have been thrown out for the improvement of the physical, intellectual, moral, and religious condition of the poor, especially in large towns, the subject of the revival of the deaconship was frequently noticed, and though no formal resolution was passed in Glasgow, I may safely say that the proposal was uniformly and unanimously approved as highly important, and fitted, where realized, to be useful in a variety of ways.

In Edinburgh the idea has been embodied in an interesting document, entitled "Statement by a Committee appointed at a Meeting of certain Ministers and Elders of the City Churches to Consider and Report upon the best Means of Promoting the Efficiency of our Parochial Administration."

Among various plans, that of a revival of the deaconship is represented as essential and required to be first and immediately adopted.

"With reference, again, to the *kind of agency* which should be employed, the Committee are unanimously of opinion, that, without superseding the assistance of other visitors, who may be willing to co-operate with them, in discharging the duties which every private Christian may lawfully undertake, with a view to the comfort, improvement, and instruction of his fellow-men, the first measure that should be adopted, is the *restoration in all our parishes of the order of deacons*,—an order of office-bearers, the institution of which is expressly recorded in the Holy Scriptures (Acts vi.), and recognised by the constitution and standards of the Church of Scotland,*—'The Scripture doth hold out deacons as distinct officers in the Church—whose office is perpetual; to whose office it belongs, not to preach the word or administer the sacraments, but to take special care in distributing to the necessities of the poor.' †

"Without entering into a detailed description of the duties of deacons and the relation of their office to that of elders, it may suffice to say, in general, that, while much of the benefit which we expect from their being restored in our city churches, will arise from the discharge of duties which are common to them with other office-bearers and even private members of the Church, it is their peculiar and distinctive function to provide for the necessities of the poor, and '*especially of those who belong to the household of faith.*' The Church is Christ's almoner; and every congregation is bound, and should deem it a privilege, to supply the wants of its poorer members. And this obligation cannot be said to be discharged when the whole poor of a city are thrown, without distinction of character or condition, on the funds of a work-house, and no other relief provided for the pious and exemplary, than what is equally given to the profligate. . . .

. . . . It cannot be reasonably doubted that their appointment would be attended with the most beneficial effects, inasmuch as many private Christians would most gladly contribute to carry on a system of efficient parochial superintendence, and the wholesome influence of such agency would be felt in a thousand ways, even though the deacons had comparatively little to give in the shape of alms.

* Dunlop's Parochial Law. Pardovan's Collection.

† Form of Church Government, 520. See also, First Book of Discipline, c. 108; Second Book, c. 8.

"The whole subject is most earnestly recommended to the serious and prayerful consideration of the ministers and elders of the Church."

Believing that the reader will be desirous to see the remedial suggestions of the same report, and that they may be useful in different and distant quarters, I take the liberty to subjoin the remainder of the "Statement." I have only to add, that it bears the much respected names of the Rev. Messrs Buchanan, C. J. Brown, Guthrie, Sym, and Alexander Dunlop, Esq., elder.

"It is universally admitted, that, in the present condition of the city parishes, there are many lamentable evils—spiritual, moral, and economical—which demand the serious attention of every office-bearer in the Church, and loudly call for some prompt and practical remedy.

"The habitual non-attendance of multitudes at any place of public worship—the indifference which prevails to a wide extent as to the privilege of communion—the neglect of family worship and instruction—the intemperance and profligacy of some—the imprudent habits of others—the abject poverty of one class—the precarious and ill-remunerated employment of another—the perpetual struggle which many an industrious family must wage with want; and the imminent hazard to which they are exposed of sinking, on any occasion of domestic affliction or stagnation of trade, which forces them to have recourse to the pawnbroker, into utter and hopeless indigence:—these may be enumerated as a few of the many evils which require to be redressed.

"While there are materials in every parish which may ultimately be made subservient for its internal improvement, in most cases the parishioners must be acted on, in the first instance, *ab extra*; as, from their practical exclusion from the parish church, they cannot be stimulated by the ordinary means of pastoral influence or public instruction.

"There exists, however, in every congregation, a vast fund of moral influence, capable of being made to bear with prodigious and most beneficial effect on the parish; an influence which at present may be said, in a great measure, to be dormant, or to lie waste; and which only requires to be concentrated and directed into the right channels, to accomplish, under the blessing of God, the desired reformation. The exertion of this influence would be 'twice bless'd; it would be a blessing to the parishioners, and not less to the members of the congregation itself. 'If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall

THE light rise in obscurity, and THE darkness shall be as the noonday.'—Isa. lviii. 10.

"It was long since observed, that 'if any effectual impression is to be made in the moral condition of a parish, it must be by means of a *more extensive agency*, by which single families may be brought under a course of moral inspection and discipline;' and 'that what bids defiance to *individual exertion*, may be accomplished by *extensive co-operation*.' "

"On this sound and enlightened principle, and with a view to a thorough and pervading system of Christian influence, a large number of office-bearers or agents is required; so that a district might be assigned to each, *containing not more than ten or twelve contiguous families*. There is reason to believe that many eminent Christians would deem it a privilege to be engaged in this way in their Master's service, and to minister to the temporal and spiritual welfare of those of whom He said, 'Forasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.' They would feel it to be a relief to them to have their attention directed to a specified field of Christian exertion, instead of being, as they are, embarrassed and distracted by applications from all quarters, which they can neither altogether refuse, nor yet thoroughly investigate; and if once engaged in this humble but most beneficent enterprise, it is not possible that, with the ordinary feelings of human nature, they should fail to take a deep, and tender, and permanent interest in all the members of those families which have thus been committed to their care. At present, the elders have the same feeling in regard to their districts, of which every faithful minister is conscious in regard to his parish,—that they are too large to be thoroughly pervaded by any moral influence which they can exert; and hence, from the utter hopelessness of doing what is really impracticable, much that might be accomplished by a subdivision of labour is left undone. But with a more extensive agency, and more complete organization, every difficulty may be surmounted, and the highest hopes of Christian philanthropy fulfilled.

"The *practical objects* to which such an agency should attend, are such as these:—

"1. The office-bearer or agent of a Christian Church should make himself thoroughly acquainted with every family intrusted to his care, and gain their confidence and affection, *as a friend*, in whose kindness they can confide, and from whom they may expect counsel and advice when required.

* Dr Abercrombie.

" 2. Another object is to see that every family be suitably supplied with Bibles.

" 3. To see that 'every boy in the district be taught to read and write, and every girl to read and sew.' *

" 4. To see that the children go regularly to school, and both parents and children to some place of public worship.

" 5. To see that they be suitably accommodated with seats, if they wish them, in their parish church.

" 6. To aid, by advice and influence, in procuring or directing to employment, where it is needed, and especially in procuring situations for girls when they leave school, and are fit for service.

" 7. To prevent and counteract, as far as possible, the pernicious effects of dependence on public charities—by stimulating their own industry—by procuring temporary private relief when it is absolutely necessary, and especially in the case of industrious families, when they have been visited with domestic affliction, which often reduces them so low, that unless they are relieved promptly and liberally, they can never afterwards recover themselves—and above all, by encouraging habits of economy and saving, so as to provide against the evil day.

" The means by which such an agency might accomplish these beneficent objects, are alike simple and efficient. It might be recommended,

" 1. To visit every family in the district as often as possible, and not less frequently than once a-month. In a district containing twelve families, this might be accomplished at the expense of half an hour a-week.

" 2. To spend an hour on Sabbath in one or other of the houses (perhaps the better way would be to go round them in rotation), where the children might be assembled for religious instruction in little domestic Sabbath schools, and thus the habit of family instruction and worship might be gradually introduced, especially if the parents were reminded of their duty in this respect, and furnished with some simple manual, expository and devotional.

" 3. To collect into a deposit fund such small sums as the parents or children might wish to save, and pay them over to the Savings' Bank. This noble institution, to be extensively available for the benefit of the working-classes, must be worked on the *aggressive principle*,—as in Liverpool, where agents go round the districts every week, to collect the savings of the poor, and transfer them to the bank, and have in

this way accumulated sums to the amount of six thousand pounds.

" 4. To report cases of sickness to the minister and elders ; and when any difficulty occurs, or any case requiring peculiar treatment, to bring it under the notice of the elder in the first instance, who may, if necessary, consult with other elders or the minister ; and to report generally on the state of the whole district, at a meeting of the agents, with the elders and minister, to be held at stated periods, say once a-quarter.

" 5. To keep a roll or book of district statistics, containing the names, ages, and occupations of all the members of the various families, to be revised and re-written once a-year, after the term in May, and the old ones preserved for the purpose of comparison.

" Many other methods of practical usefulness will readily suggest themselves to a Christian agent, whose heart is in the work ; such as the promoting of cleanliness, sufficient ventilation, and many more too minute to be specified, but which, in the aggregate, would confer a general and permanent blessing on every little locality.

" That the establishment of *some such agency* is highly desirable, and loudly called for, in the present circumstances of society, cannot be doubted by any one who is at all conversant with the actual state of our city parishes ; and whether it be regarded with reference to the diffusion of saving spiritual instruction, or to the secondary, but still important object of increasing the means of temporal comfort among our parishioners, its value cannot be too highly estimated. It would seem to be the likeliest means, under the Divine blessing, of renewing that friendly intercourse betwixt the different classes of society, which once existed, but which has been too much interrupted by the habits of modern life, and of reviving those reciprocal feelings of kindness which cannot be allowed to decay without being supplanted by jealousies, which threaten the destruction of all that is bland, and peaceful, and happy in a well-conditioned community. It might exert a prodigious power, in the way of checking intemperance, preventing or curing poverty, and arrest the degeneracy of those who, yielding to the pressure of circumstances, are ready to sink into the most abject debasement. It might save many from the prison and penitentiary, many more from the charity work-house, and more still from the ruinous habit of resorting on every emergency to the pawnbroker's shop.

"If the establishment of such an agency be a desirable object, the only questions which require to be considered are, Is it practicable? and, if it be, What kind of agency should be employed? and, What means can be placed at their disposal?"

"That the establishment of such an agency is practicable, appears not only from the experience of St John's parish in Glasgow, and St John's parish in Edinburgh, as well as others which might be mentioned; but from the declared willingness of many Christian men to lend their aid in promoting these great objects of Christian philanthropy."*

While there can be no question that much may be done in this way to ameliorate the whole character and condition, especially of the humbler classes in society,—while partial success can be appealed to in a case known to the writer of several years' duration; it is right, at the same time, to bear in mind, in order to prevent disappointment and the waste of resources on impracticable or doubtful expedients, that it is only an approximation which after all is attainable,—that it must be extremely difficult to work machinery of such immense magnitude,—that there is great fluctuation among the agents, and no small danger of their getting wearied and falling away in the course of time. Not at all in the spirit of discouragement, but rather to prevent exaggerated hopes, which are always injurious, I beg to subjoin the following facts, which go far to show that the visitations and superintendence of private Christians, however important in their own place, cannot be depended on as a *substitute* for the regular and appropriate parochial machinery of the Established Church. It must only be employed as a help and a supplement; so contemplated, it is highly useful and may *experimentally* convince not a few who now hang back from bearing office in the Christian Church (though solicited in the Providence of God to do so), that there is nothing so very formidable in the moral and religious charge of a limited number of families, as should discourage them from undertaking it. Still the only security for a permanent and trustworthy provision, is the extensive subdivision of parishes, and the appointment of truly evangelical pastors, elders, and deacons, to a manageable population.

The Rev. Mr Gibson of Glasgow, whose services to the Established Church in various ways, and in connection with

* In St John's, Edinburgh, I understand that there 80 persons who, whether as office-bearers or as private Christians, devote their moral and religious care to the parish.

the Inquiries of the Religious Instruction Commissioners among others, are well known and appreciated, proved before the Board, from unquestionable authority, that a single successful parochial church in Glasgow exceeded, in point of moral and religious result, the attainments of extensive associations of Evangelical Dissenters, numbering many visitors : such are the fluctuations and uncertainties which belong to the operations of a visiting society of private Christians, however estimable. The facts are undeniable, resting chiefly on the acknowledgment of intelligent Dissenters themselves. One minister had in his congregation 30 agents at the time he gave his evidence ; at the time of the report of the association, two months subsequently, they had fallen to 14 ; by the time of the printing of the report again, they had risen to 22. Another minister in a single year lost 10 agents and 6 meetings ; and then, with regard to the success of the scheme in drawing out the people to receive religious instruction, a society with 50 agents and 11 stations had an attendance of from 15 to 75 persons each. Taking 30 as a fair average, we have here 330, while a single new church has been the means of drawing to the worship of God between 200 and 300 who had not been in the habit of attending any place of worship before, independently of a large general congregation : this was stated in evidence. It may be added, that the labour of the different Instruction societies and City missions have not been instrumental in raising a single place of worship. These facts are stated, not for the purpose of disparaging the labours of private Christians, or of the modes of instruction which Evangelical Dissenters in some of the large towns pursue,—far from it ; it is believed that much good is, with the Divine blessing, wrought out by such channels,—good, for which it becomes every Christian to be thankful, even had it been much less than it really is. But in comparing different means of good, it is well to know which is the more successful, and to be guarded against exaggerated expectations from what at first sight seems fair. It is always matter of regret where superior instrumentality is neglected or not applied, in consequence of a preference for what is supposed to be as good, while experience has proved its inferiority. In this way, both time and resources are relatively lost, and faithful men are discouraged. At the same time, in the absence of the best, every intelligent Christian will of course choose the next best,—any thing is better than utter sloth and indifference to the spiritual welfare of our fellow-men.

No. III.

PRACTICAL EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE WORKING OF THE
DEACONSHIP EVEN IN A LARGE TOWN.

ONE of the deacons of St John's, Glasgow, of well known intelligence, happening to be a friend, I submitted to him the following queries, and received from him the accompanying answers. Though this parish was upon a peculiar system, and, in cases where it is known that there is a fixed legal provision for the poor, deacons have not the same motives for strict investigation of cases, still the information is valuable, and so far applicable to all parishes, whether under legal or voluntary management. I am sure the reader will thank me for the statement. It shows what might be done in more favourable circumstances. The length of time over which the testimony extends renders it the more valuable:—

Q. 1. How long were you a deacon of St John's?

A. Eighteen years,—from 1819 to 1837.

Q. 2. What was the size of your district; how many families?

A. At my first survey the district contained 99 families of 476 individuals. Next year several additional deacons were appointed, and my proportion was reduced to 56 families of nearly 300 members. In 1831 some new houses were built, increasing the families to 81—359 members, and so on from year to year, till the population amounted to 117 families of 570 members.

Q. 3. What time did the charge occupy; did you easily overtake the management?

A. With 56 families, in ordinary circumstances, very little of my time was occupied, and my office was by no means irksome; but when the families increased to 80, 100, and upwards, I found it more difficult to keep up my acquaintance in the district, so that I had less comfort in going amongst them, and whilst my visits were in reality more requisite, they became less frequent. It is easy to keep up a pleasant familiar knowledge of a small number of families, which creates such interest as to carry one readily back to the district.

Q. 4. What were the general principles on which you acted in the management of the poor?

A. My first aim was to become acquainted with all the

families, and when any person applied for relief, I visited and made a strict investigation, then gave in a report of the case at our first monthly meeting. If it was considered that farther inquiry was requisite, or to relieve me of the odium of a refusal, if such was thought proper, another deacon was appointed to visit along with me.

Q. 5. What was the mode in which you sought to carry your principles into effect ?

A. If the applicant was out of work, or had children able for work, we used such means as were within our reach to get employment for them ; or if they had any friends or relatives able to assist them, or were members of any Dissenting congregation, we were required to apply to any or all of these quarters before granting any allowance !

Q. 6. How often were you in the habit of visiting your district ?

A. The year 1819-20 was one of great depression and great hardship, and my visits were of course very frequent and *very trying*, as the operatives were almost in a state of rebellion, and many of them scowled upon me in defiance ; but by steady perseverance I was enabled to overcome that feeling, and gained a knowledge of the people at that time, which made frequent visits less needful for years to come.

Q. 7. What topics did you find for conversation ?

A. Education, week-day and Sabbath schools, were fruitful topics on my part, and poverty and distress never failing ones on the part of the people.

Q. 8. Were you well received ?

A. Yes, with few exceptions ; and in many cases most cordially welcomed, and much pressed to repeat my visit soon.

Q. 9. Had you any difficulty in ascertaining the exact truth ? What means did you employ to reach it ?

A. Where the people thought they had any interest in concealing it, or if they did not understand the object of my inquiries, I found it very difficult to get at the exact truth, and frequently have come away with a wrong impression ; however, this helped to sharpen my ingenuity, though often baffled after all.

Q. 10. Do you remember particular cases of good being done, and of the expression of gratitude for your services ?

A. I can recollect but a very few cases in which the relief afforded called forth *any* expression of gratitude, and that came from industrious well-doing folks, who were anxious to help themselves, and who had received from me some little

acts of kindness besides the parish aid. Of course much real good was done.

Q. 11. Did you use means to prevent poverty; such as by encouraging education, church attendance, the savings' bank, circulating Bibles, finding employment for those out of work?

A. The means stated in this query were used on various occasions, but none of them except the last when a person applied for parish aid; the others would not have gone well down with a starving family. The deacons were often very useful in finding work for the people.

Q. 12. In what would you say that the mainspring of your management consisted?

A. Kindness, prompt attention to every application, whether deserving or not; never administering help in ignorance to save myself the trouble of a visit; rigid investigation, &c. See answer to query 4th.

Q. 13. When the people got accustomed to the St John's management, did they like it as well as that of other sessions?

A. For some years at first there was a strong prejudice against St John's management,—alleging that they were deprived of the Town's hospital; and this was strengthened by parties from other parishes that ought to have known better; but, latterly, I had no complaints on that score, and our imports from other parishes in town were always greater than our exports.

Q. 14. Was it as liberal in cases of real distress?

A. We were furnished with a list of the allowances made by the Town's hospital for cases beyond the sessional, and we were regulated by it; but, in some cases, such as palsy, &c., we were constrained to give a very liberal aliment.

Q. 15. Did you live near the district, or do you attach any importance to this?

A. I did not live in my district, but (though many of my brethren held a different opinion) I think it of very great importance that the deacon should do so, as it tends to save much of his time, and give him greater facilities in acquiring a knowledge of his district, as well as a benefit to the applicants themselves.

Q. 16. Are there any suggestions which occur to you as important in connection with the management, such as regular attendance on the court of deacons, &c.

A. I consider regular attendance at the deacons' meetings of the utmost importance; it keeps up his interest, adds to his knowledge and experience, and strengthens the hands of his fellow-labourers. During my 18 years I declined all

engagements which would interfere with those meetings, and was absent on only six or eight occasions, owing either to sickness or being necessarily from home. I think, also, the minister of the parish should be as often present as possible, and ought to make himself well acquainted with the working of the system, as his opinion will naturally have much weight with inexperienced hands.

No. IV.

SAVINGS' BANKS IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEACONSHIP.

I HAVE adverted to the important service which Deacons, in the exercise of their appropriate calling, might render to the humbler classes, by the encouragement of provident institutions. The *prevention* of poverty surely falls as distinctly within the range of their duties as its *relief*. In Manchester I understand that there is a society of young men, who may be said to act as pioneers and assistants to the Savings' Bank. They weekly go through their districts, and collect from the families what they can spare, however small, and deposit it in their name in the bank. In this way a kind interest is shown by a higher in behalf of a humbler class of the community, money is saved which might have been squandered or lost, and habits of forethought are formed. In short, the parochial principle is applied to the savings' bank. The facilities which are afforded in a kind way for directing their resources, encourage families to become depositors in the savings' bank, who would never otherwise have dreamed of it themselves; and where good habits are created, the parties are soon able to walk alone. I am persuaded that deacons in the Christian Church, consisting chiefly of young men of an active turn of mind, of intelligence and religious character, and whose very office, with its responsibilities, points to the care and welfare of the poor, would often, and that with the greatest ease and advantage, discharge the duties which are accomplished by a general association at Manchester. It is probable that the agents of the Association only contribute *in part* to the success of the "Manchester and Salford Bank for Savings," but the prosperity of the institution should form an argument for calling in the aid of such Christian agents in other cases. It appears, from the last report, that there are about 15,000 depositors,—that the whole sum due them is about L.400,000,—that from the commencement, in 1818, to the present time,

the deposits under L.5, indicating the poorer classes, have amounted to about 200,000,—and that last year they constituted *three-fourths* of the entire deposits, the greatest number of them being between 5s. and 10s. 6d. It is interesting to notice among the depositors 1280 widows, and 5540 minors which in many cases is probably another name for orphans. How could a faithful deacon more usefully occupy himself than as the encourager of such excellent institutions, whether as in some districts himself a receiver, or in others as an active agent, diffusing information and collecting sums!

No. V.

EXAGGERATED VIEWS OF THE CRIME OF GLASGOW, SCOTLAND, &c.,—THE SUCCESS OF RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL MEANS IN REPRESSING IT.

SOME may be disposed to ask what connection this topic has with the revival of the order of deacon. There is an important connection. In addition to regard for primitive Church order, one of the leading reasons for attempting the revival of the deaconship is, to ameliorate the condition of the humbler classes of society, especially in the large towns. But, in order to this, it is desirable to have just views of the real nature of that condition. Now, I trust I am, in some tolerable measure, alive to the degradation and wretchedness of a large body of the community, and of not a few even in rural districts. But, on that very account, I lament that exaggerated views of the evil with which the nation has to contend, particularly in reference to crime, or the moral condition of the humbler classes, should be entertained and propagated. The evils are sufficiently great in themselves, and amply notorious, without needing exaggeration. To overcolour moral evils, to exaggerate crimes, if this be done to any serious extent, is always very injurious. It disheartens the good from using any exertions to correct what seems so hopeless, and it corrupts the wicked yet more: they look upon crime as a sort of necessity springing out of an unhappy state of society—they come to think of it lightly; and thus the very prevalence of sin tends to propagate it. Besides, exaggerated statements in regard to crime are first misunderstood and then perverted, to the disparagement, it may be, of the character and best institutions of our land, among foreigners. How greedily does the Papist of the Continent devour the

grossly over-coloured representations of Scottish crime, and turn these to the disadvantage of our Protestant Christianity ; perhaps alleging, with truth, that his alleged error is more favourable to morality than our boasted truth. In this way, general and serious prejudices are fostered against the Word and Church of God in their purest forms—and all for what ? The gratification of an idle wonder, perhaps unenquiring credulity, which delights in the terrible. It brings no counter-balancing good. Nay, it is a just moral retribution on exaggeration, that he who deals in it comes to be disbelieved even where he is trustworthy.

To take a few illustrations of the exaggeration to which I refer, Mr Alison, the Sheriff of Glasgow, in his work "On Population," vol. ii. p. 80, states the sum annually expended in this city on whisky as at least £1,200,000, in other words, nearly one and a-quarter million sterling ; of which he gives the million to the working-classes. Now, appalling and most lamentable as the intemperance of Glasgow may be, I am satisfied, on the best evidence of which the case admits, that there is vast exaggeration here. Mr Collins, when President of the Temperance Society ten years ago, a gentleman of noted intelligence and candour, after great and anxious consideration, estimated the whole Glasgow consumption—and it is enormous—at £482,000 ; and his calculation was generally allowed to be just and reasonable. The population at that time was above 200,000, and though it has grown largely within the last 10 years, yet the increase has not been such as to lend the slightest countenance to the swelling figures of the Sheriff at the time they were published, or even now. To show the extreme exaggeration which has been indulged in, it is only necessary to remind the reader, that were Mr Alison's statement correct, every family in Glasgow must spend £20 a-year on spirits alone, while very many of them never taste spirits at all, and multitudes have not above 12s. a-week, or £26, for their whole annual subsistence. Does every labourer spend £20 out of his £26 on spirits ? Let families even in the higher ranks of life consider whether their spirit account alone amounts yearly to £20. Surely every one must at once see the extravagance of the assertion : and yet the official name of the Sheriff gives currency to such sad and injurious representations. Of course, if some families do not consume spirits at all, or consume less than £20 worth yearly, the greater amount must be divided among those who do.

Parallel to the above is another in the same work, that

"nearly 30,000 persons are every Saturday night in a state of brutal intoxication." If the consumption was so enormous as was alleged, it would not be wonderful that the intoxication should correspond. It may be hoped that when the one disappears the other will also vanish. What possible evidence can be referred to in proof of 30,000 weekly intoxications, the vast body of them, if they exist at all, secret ; and unless they can be established, is it right in itself, or fair to the character of the city, or patriotic, to deal in such hateful charges ! The whole number of "drunk and disorderly," as appears from the records of the police-office—and they are decreasing, while the population is increasing—were, in the last three years :—

1839,	3864
1840, ...	3746
1841, ...	3642

These numbers mark the cases which are amenable to the police in a population of 175,000, not every Saturday night, but in the course of a whole year ; and though there are very many cases of intoxication which never come within the cognisance of the police-office, and the above do not embrace the whole police cases of Glasgow, yet surely the returns of little more than 3000 in a year, in the police of the city, pour utter ridicule upon the extravagance of 30,000 every week !

There is a still more abominable charge, and that, too, given on parliamentary evidence. It is to the effect that the factory girls, who constitute so important a part of the population of Glasgow, are abandoned to the worst species of profligacy. It is part of the cruelty involved in such charges, that they do not admit of proof or disproof, save by a trial of one's moral delicacy. I have thought it due to the character of a large body of workers, not a few unbefriended orphans, to make inquiry in quarters where the truth is most likely to be known, and I am satisfied that the charge is utterly baseless. Factory females are not worse in point of character than females of the same station of life in other departments. The late Rev. Dr M'Gill, the Professor of Theology in the College, who took a lively interest in institutions for reclaiming offenders, and who was a man of sound observation, rated young women working in the factory, not in his 1st, but in his 4th class of offenders ; and the returns of the Lock Hospital—I have it on the testimony of the medical officer who has attended for many years—is in harmony with Dr M'Gill's conclusions. These returns show,

1838,	265 patients, out of which	101	} <i>had been connected with the mills. These out of the vast numbers working in the mills are a small proportion.</i>
1839,	275 " "	90	
1840,	236 " "	64	

An intelligent Christian who was for six years connected with a mill, as a teacher, states, that out of 400 females there was only one visible departure from moral propriety in three years, and that the seducer was a person of superior station, who married the person whom he injured. The same witness testifies what I have learned of other mills, that the very suspicion of any impropriety in a single instance was resented,—that it was considered as bringing a stain on the character of the factory, and that the guilty party or parties felt their position so uncomfortable, that they might be said to be hunted out of the employment. Another gentleman, who, in the character of a missionary and Sabbath school teacher, was for four years a Christian labourer among a mill population, concurs in the same testimony, and his powers of observation are remarkably shrewd. Other evidence, such as that of the intelligent managers of mills, could be appealed to to the same purpose ; but it is unnecessary. I may merely add, that it appears from the New Statistical Account of one of the parishes of Renfrewshire, drawn up by an excellent minister, that in a parish where there are two large cotton mills, the proportion of young women giving evidence of piety, and making a profession of Christianity by becoming communicants, is as high as young females of the same class engaged in agricultural employments, in the same parish. Nothing, then, can be more reckless than the statements which have been made. There may be particular mills whose character is low ; but it is unfair, in the teeth of facts, to convert these into a universal experience, and that of the worst possible description. How would we ourselves,—how would the middling or the higher classes of society like sweeping charges to be brought against their general character or occupation ; and is not character as dear and as important to the humbler as to the more opulent members of society ! It is due to many members of the Church of Christ to defend their character from these most unjust aspersions, and to call upon their accusers to establish their charges, or retract them. It is to be feared that nothing better than theoretical notions of modern society lie at the root of the general accusation against character, and that facts are assumed to help out fond but feeble conclusions.

Turning, however, from the particular case of Glasgow, let us advert to the condition of Scotland generally under the same aspect—that of crime. That there is a decided increase of crime throughout Scotland is a lamentable truth, which calls for humiliation, and the most active application of appropriate means to check and prevent it. With the inadequate moral and religious machinery in operation, it is not wonderful; but it is not less certain, that here, too, there is gross exaggeration, or at least that explanations (seldom if ever given) are indispensable, to prevent the most serious misapprehensions and manifold false inferences.

It appears from official returns, that in Scotland in
 1832, there were 2431 commitments for crime.
 1836, " 2922 "
 1840, " 3872 "

I take these years because they are recent, and form an equal division of time. Certainly, under whatever aspect the progress can be viewed, it is serious and affecting. In eight years there have been 1442 additional cases; but we have to remember,

1st, The increase of the population, which has been, as appears from the recent census, 11 per cent. in Scotland during the last ten years.

2d, The influx of Irish into the large towns; and as railway labourers, &c., of late into more rural districts.

3d, The growing establishment of county police, which, as a new and zealous force, brings upon record every offence which is committed, however inconsiderable, and which, by new regulations, multiplies, especially at first, the chances of offence.

With regard to the first—the increase of population—this, though often overlooked, is a very important element. For instance, it appears that over Great Britain and Ireland, in the last ten years, it is equal to an increase of three millions—a number *more than the whole population of Scotland*. It is plain, that in the natural course of things, without any special blame attributable to any parties, a proportional increase of crime is to be looked for, and from that increase it is not to be expected that Scotland should be exempted.

The recent and growing influx of Irish, chiefly members of the Church of Rome, is well known; but their connection with the increase of crime in Scotland is less understood than it ought to be. From a variety of sources of proof, it is manifest that that connection is a very important one.

In the year 1840, of the offenders brought before the Magistrates of Glasgow, 791, constituting *one-fourth* of the whole

number, were Irish—(*vide* Capt. Miller's "State of Crime" for 1840) — while the Irish population do not constitute 70,000, or one-fourth of the population, but a much smaller proportion, probably a ninth or a tenth. Of the 205 offenders sent to Calton Bridewell in 1839, considerably above *one-third* were Irish. So, of the 83 boys received into the House of Refuge for Repressing Juvenile Delinquency, in 1839, not less than 24 were the children of an Irish father, 18 of an Irish mother—in other words, *one-half* were of Irish parentage. Though almost all the youths may have been born in this country, yet they inherited the low moral standard and social condition of their parents.—(*Vide* Second Annual Report.) Of the patients in the Lock Hospital, *one-sixth* were born in Ireland. If tried by the test of *parentage*, the numbers would have been far greater. Of 1038 destitute families exposed to the temptations of crime, relieved by extraordinary charity, in 1838, about *one-third* (310) were Irish; and let it not be thought that this state of things is peculiar to Glasgow. Other large towns have their share; nay, it is felt in rural districts. Of the "strangers" convicted for crime in the county and burghs of East Lothian, in 1841, not less than *one-fifth* were Irish, though this is an agricultural county, on the east coast of Scotland, and therefore removed from the western influx, and without any work calling particularly for Irish labour.

I do not mention these things as reflecting upon the Irish nation, or as intimating that those belonging to it who settle in Scotland are not suitable objects of all the care which faithful pastors, elders, and deacons can bestow, but simply as correcting false impressions regarding crime in Scotland—impressions fitted to paralyze good men from making any attempt at the moral improvement of their country.

The remaining point, viz., the establishment of County police, however important and useful, and really in the end preventive of crime, tends in the meantime to swell the *apparent* amount, and so to mislead those who are not at the pains to inquire. That this new force, which has already been introduced into several counties, and is, I believe, in the course of being introduced into all, has a very marked effect in adding to the *apparent* increase of crime, is abundantly obvious. It is clear, from a comparison of the annual official returns of crime by the Lord Advocate, that within the last four or five years there has been a great *proportional* increase of offences. Previous to that date, the increase was about a hundred offences a-year, which might in a great de-

gree be accounted for by the progress of the population ; but latterly the increase has been 200, 300, 400, additional cases in a year. A remarkable illustration of this is furnished by the county of East Lothian, or Haddingtonshire. So lately as 1837, its criminal offenders are stated at 23 ; whereas, under the county police, in 1840, the convictions rise up to 275, and in 1841 to not less than 611. Now, no one who is acquainted with that peaceful rural county, can imagine that it is really advancing in so frightful a ratio of crime, and all the while without attracting any attention from the country, and without alarming those who are living in the midst of it. A glance at the county returns goes far to explain the case. It appears, that of the offences of 1841, nearly *one-third* are what are called "road offences," such as carters not attending to their horses, clothes drying on the road hedges, animals grazing on the road-side, &c., &c.,—offences surely which scarcely deserve the name of crimes. Then a great many others are most trifling,—so much so, that out of the 611, only two were so serious as to need to be tried by the High Court of Justiciary. "*About two-thirds*," the superintendent reports, "*of the persons convicted were detected by the police when in the act of committing the offence for which they were punished*,"—an indication at once of the zeal of the police, and the comparatively trifling character of the offences. Were the offences more serious, the parties, we may well believe, would have been more on their guard. If, under the new rural police, all the other counties of Scotland make up similar criminal returns, it is plain that Scotland will soon be made to appear a very nursery and home of criminals ; and all at a distance, and those who are on the spot, but are not at the pains to inquire, must be most injuriously misled and deceived. It is possible that all who appear in the county police lists are not included in the Lord Advocate's official returns (though there is the same division of courts before which offenders are tried), but there can be no question that the operation of such a force must tend greatly to swell the general returns.

As an evidence of the necessity of classification in criminal returns, and of the propriety of excluding such offences as "Road offences" from the catalogue of crimes, it may be stated, that "Contraventions of police regulations" come under the same head in the large towns ; and nothing would be more unfair or misleading than to reckon them among moral offences. I am happy to be able to refer to the testimony of Capt. Miller of the Glasgow Police upon this point. After stating, in answer to a number of queries which I put

to him on the state of crime, and which he kindly answered, that in the general aggregate of offences in Glasgow, not less than 2562 in the year 1840, and 2559 in 1841, were "contraventions of police regulations," he adds:—"Although the number of *convictions* for contraventions of the police regulations, during the last two years, has been larger than formerly, it is no evidence of crime. On the contrary, even the number of such offences has been falling off; and the difference arises from the more strict enforcement of the police regulations. *This class of offences, however, is distinct from criminal matters, and their increase or decrease affords no data for fixing the state of crime.*" The whole number of offences, as brought under Capt. Miller's returns in 1841, is 8727. This, under any circumstances, is an appalling number; but to those who do not analyse it, it must seem to indicate a much worse state of things than really exists. Deducting the "drunk and disorderly, and the contraventions of police rules," the number is reduced to 2546 for crime, strictly so called—a number which, in itself, and particularly when the increase of population is taken into account, shows a decided *diminution* from former years. The same point is indicated by the number of trials at the Glasgow Circuit Courts, which embrace cases from the counties of Lanark, Dumbarton, and Renfrew, though Glasgow supplies the largest proportion. In 1839 there were 206; in 1840, 152; and in 1841, 172. The increase of the population, in the meantime, and the growing want of employment, must always be remembered in forming a general estimate.

In harmony with the above, it appears from an interesting report of Mr Rutherglen, one of the magistrates of the Calton, read before the "British Association," when in Glasgow a few years ago, that the crime in Calton, with a population of nearly 30,000, was, in

1836,	3451.	Deducting drunk, &c., and police contraventions,	crime proper is reduced to	837
1839,	2601.	Do.,	do.,	do., 766

thus showing a *decrease* of crime, while the population was increasing, and the outward circumstances of the people not improving, but the reverse. With reference to the last year named (1839), the same gentleman states,—“On a careful examination of the whole cases, it is gratifying to be able to state, that the offences were of so light a description during the year, as on some occasions not to have furnished even *one* sufficiently serious to be brought before the Justiciary

Court during its sittings." He adds,—“The criminal population is less by *one-half* than it was in 1835-6; and although in 1839 there were 2601 charged, and 1799 convicted, yet it is proper to mention, that the same person has been charged and convicted as often as *three* times with petty thefts, and with other crimes and offences *twenty* times in the course of the year; and it is not in *one*, but in many cases that this has occurred.” Mr Rutherglen farther states, that a *large* proportion of the crime which exists is committed by “the floating population;” in other words, the parties which are least accessible to moral and religious means. But for them the actual crime would be small indeed.

So far from the crime of the city increasing in such a ratio as to paralyze Christian men from any attempt at the amelioration of society,—so far from its proclaiming, as some hastily imagine, that all the late schemes and efforts of Christian Churches are vain and hopeless, I rejoice to have it in my power again to refer to the testimony of the Captain of Police.

Though the crime of the city and suburbs had been visibly and enormously increasing, instead, as we have seen, of proportionally *decidedly* diminishing, it would not by any means show that the enlarged moral and religious appliances of late years, by additional schools and churches, &c., had been inefficacious. The highest good may be doing in some quarters while evil is doing in others, and, as a whole, the progress of the latter is strongly and conspicuously onward. But it is encouraging to be able, not only to point to diminished crime, but *crime diminished by moral means*.

The following question was put to Capt. Miller:—“Q. From any thing which has passed under Capt. Miller’s observation, is he disposed to attribute a share of the diminution of crime (supposing that there is a decrease) to the moral and educational means put into operation of late years—such as week-day and Sabbath schools, additional places of worship, &c.?” A. The answer is, “From Capt. Miller’s *own experience*, and from *particular inquiries* he has made on this subject, he is decidedly of opinion, that the moral and educational means lately put into operation, taken in connection with the improved habits of many of the lower classes, who are members of Temperance and total abstinence societies, *have done much to improve the moral condition of the people, and of course to diminish crime.*” The testimony of the Rev. Dr Black, who, as minister of the Barony parish, has had his attention particularly called to the operation of the new churches connected with the Estab-

ishment, could be appealed to to a similar effect. He has repeatedly and publicly testified to the success of more than one of the new churches in diminishing pauperism and improving the social condition of the locality where they have been planted. Mr Rutherglen, who is a resident in, as well as a magistrate of, Calton, and who states that his attention has been particularly called to the operation of additional schools in connection with one church (St Luke's) in that locality, still adheres to the statement which he made before the British Association in 1840, which was to this effect, that the new church, besides occupying the site of 60 houses which were the haunts of wretchedness and crime, and so physically removing a great moral nuisance, had, through the exertions of the minister and his elders, coupled with the establishing of 20 Sabbath schools in the parish, *tended greatly* both to reduce crime, and to improve the morals of that part of the burgh.*

The testimony of Mr M'Laren, who has for above ten years been the Superintendent of the poor of the Barony parish, is in full harmony with the above representation. He states, in answer to some queries which I also put to him, that, ten years ago, in one district of the same parish, he required to pay the poor £13, 7s. ; the same district now requires only £2: 19: 6d. Another required £11: 0: 6d. ; at the present date it requires £6, 5s. He shows, at the same time, that the change has not been owing to a less liberal provision for the poor ; that, on the contrary, the numbers of the poor generally through the parish have considerably increased, and that the allowances have been rising in amount ; the change he attributes to moral causes. In answer to one of the queries which were put to him, he says,—“ I have paid considerable attention to the operation of the new churches and schools, and am fully of opinion, that the establishing of these has contributed greatly to the diminution of both pauperism and crime. I might instance several of the *quoad sacra* parishes, such as St Stephen's, St Mark's, Bridgeton (all in the Barony) ; but I point out St Luke's as one of the poorest localities of the parish, where the greatest improvement has taken place.” It

* There had been five Sabbath schools in the parish prior to 1837, when the church was opened, but no week-day school. Now there is a week-day school, partly supported by the General Assembly's Educational Fund, attended by between 200 and 300 children, besides evening classes. There are also 25 Sabbath schools, attended by 600 children. Besides the labours of the minister, the parish enjoys the services of 10 elders, who have appropriate districts. The population at last census was 3500. I may add, that it has been remarked by some landlords, that their rents are better paid since the moral and religious means were put into operation.

is well for the reader to bear in mind, that while moral improvement has been going on, external circumstances have been adverse; the population has been increasing, and the depression among the people, chiefly hand-loom weavers, has been great. The records of the Church Extension Scheme prove the same points as the schools and churches referred to, in regard to more rural districts. Indeed, *there* the result is more visible than it can be expected to be in large towns.

To prevent Scottish Christians, owing to the loose statements which have been made of the unexampled progress of crime in this country, being disheartened in their labours, I may subjoin a comparative view of the state of crime in England and Wales. We have seen that the commitments for crime in Scotland,

In the years 1832, were 2431

1836, " 2922

1840, " 3872

In the same years, the crime of England and Wales was,—

In 1832, 20,829 persons committed.

1836, 20,984 "

1840, 27,187 "

Now, it appears from the late census, that the population of Scotland is about *one-sixth* of that of England and Wales. Were its crime in the same proportion, the Scottish criminals should, at the respective dates, have been 3471, 3497, 4531; instead of which they were what has been stated—in other words, Scotland had *less* proportional crime than England by 1040, 575, and 659, in the years referred to, and *that* though Scotland be a poorer country, and is a stranger to the English poor law system, which by many is alleged to be a defence against crime, and though, probably, the influx of Irish is proportionally greater into Scotland than into England.

It would scarcely be fair to compare Scotland with Ireland—a Protestant with a Popish country. I may merely mention the numbers without expatiating on them. For instance, in Ireland,

In 1832 there were 16,056 commitments.

1836 " 23,891 "

1840 " 23,822 "

Scotland is nearly *one-third* of the population of Ireland; were her criminals proportional in numbers they should have been 5352 and 7963, instead of 2431 and 2922. In other words, Ireland had *proportionally* for these years, 2921 and 5041 more criminals than Scotland. But perhaps the most striking fact is, that in 1837, the province of Ulster—the most Protestant

territory of Ireland—(still one-half the population is Roman Catholic) with a population somewhat less than Scotland, had not less than 5605 criminal commitments. In the same year Scotland had 3126 commitments for crime ; in other words, *proportionally* 2479 fewer criminals than the most Protestant part of the sister country !

It is right, however, to state, that, while Ulster suffers in a comparison with Scotland, doubtless from its large Roman Catholic population, it gains immensely on comparison with any other part of Ireland. Thus, the one county of Tipperary in 1837 (population 402,563) had 4239 crimes, while the whole of the ten counties of Ulster (population 2,314,104) had, at the same time as we have seen, 5605 ; and while in the Tipperary crimes there were 124 homicides, many of those of Ulster were comparatively trifling. A few years before, too, the military expense of Ulster was only one-twelfth of the general military cost ; and of twenty-five regiments in Ireland, only two were stationed in that province, while its population was nearly a third of the whole population of the country.

From these important facts, resting chiefly on official returns, I humbly think it is sufficiently obvious, that, most melancholy as is the *amount* of crime in our country, it is often very unnecessarily and mischievously exaggerated ; and that, sad as are its aspects in Scotland, there is nothing in it to discourage the efforts of faithful pastors, elders and deacons, in seeking the amelioration and moral and religious renovation of the people. The reader will readily believe that the statements which have been made (and which have run to far greater length than was originally intended) are not designed to convey light views of, far less to apologise for crime, nor to discourage the application of preventive force in rural parishes as well as large towns, nor to slacken the zeal of those who are labouring against the tide of prevailing ungodliness, as if their diligence were unnecessary ; but solely to correct exaggerated views, which are at once injurious to the character of our common country, and disheartening to those who have devoted, and are desirous to devote themselves yet more and more to the religious improvement of their fellow-men. As a Scotchman and a Christian, deeply interested in the success of all the plans of moral good which of late years have been put into operation, especially by the National Church, it is impossible not to regret the exaggerated statements in regard to crime which are often unwittingly propagated,—statements which seem to pour contempt on all the

prayers and labours of the Christian Church, and to abandon a large body of men as hopeless both in character and condition. It is the more to be regretted, when good men, without thought, give currency to the same representations, and are relaxed by what should rather move them to new diligence and zeal.

THE END.







